SOCIAL PLANNING and RESEARCH COUNCIL
of Hamilton and District

155 JAMES STREET SOUTH, 6TH FLOOR HAMILTON, ONTARIO L8P 3A4 TELEPHONE 522-1148

A DESCRIPTION OF THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

UPDATE 1991

Prepared by
Jane Opie,
Research Assistant

in Collaboration with
Gloria DeSantis,
Research Director

August, 1988

1991 Update by
Mike Pennock,
Executive Director

August, 1991

© THE SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL
OF HAMILTON AND DISTRICT

155 James Street South, Suite 601
Hamilton, Ontario L8P 3A4

All rights reserved including the right to
reproduce in whole or in part of any form.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Preface to the 1991 Update.	iii
Definition of Key Terms	v
1.0 INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Overriding Principle.	1
1.2 Adequacy.	1
1.3 Meaningful Participation.	2
2.0 BASIC GOALS OF AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM	
2.1 Adequacy, Accessibility and Equity.	4
2.2 Current Impediments to Achieving These Goals	
2.2.1 Chronic Poverty.	5
2.2.2 Inaccessibility of Services and Resources.	5
2.2.3 Inequity	10
2.3 New Initiatives in Ontario Intended to Help Reduce These Impediments	11
3.0 THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM	
3.1 Overview of the Programs.	12
3.2 General Welfare Assistance	
3.2.1 Overview	12
3.2.2 Long-Term Receipt of G.W.A..	15
3.2.3 Employment	15
3.2.4 Payments and Poverty	19
3.2.5 Shelter Subsidy.	22
3.2.6 Fraud.	23
3.2.7 Municipal Tax Base	24
3.2.8 SARC: One Year Later	25
3.3 Family Benefits Assistance	
3.3.1 Overview	28
3.3.2 Longer Term Assistance - Longer Term Poverty	30
3.3.3 The Disabled and Other Special Cases	31
3.3.4 Shelter Subsidy.	32
3.3.5 Support Services and Employment.	32
3.4 Guaranteed Annual Income Supplement for the Aged (GAINS-A)	
3.4.1 Overview	35
3.4.2 Types of Programs.	36
3.4.3 A Lifetime of Poverty.	36
4.0 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES	
4.1 Poverty as a Long Term Condition.	38
4.2 The Working Poor.	38
4.3 The Need for Support Programs: Some Examples.	39
4.3.1 Expanded Employment.	40
4.3.2 Employment Facilitator: Child Care	45
4.3.3 Housing.	45
5.0 THE FUTURE	50

References. 52

Appendix A - Recommendations from Social Planning and Research Council Brief to Social Assistance Review Committee (November, 1986)

Appendix B - Notes to Figures 1 to 4

Appendix C - General Welfare Assistance Rates in Hamilton-Wentworth for August 1990

Appendix D - Employment Growth in Hamilton C.M.A.

Appendix E - A Description of the Point Rating System

PREFACE TO THE 1991 EDITION

This updated report is based on A Brief Submitted to the Social Assistance Review Committee (Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District, 1986) and A Description of the Social Assistance System in Hamilton-Wentworth (Social Planning and Research Council, 1990). The 1990 version of this report has been updated to include new provincial initiatives in social assistance. It should be noted that the entire system of social assistance in Ontario is in an enormous "state of flux" given three major provincial reports: Social Assistance Review Committee report; Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review report, and; Discussion Paper for Devolved Models of Health and Social Services. The magnitude of impending reform is so significant that we may see a completely different system in place by 1993 or 1994.

The primary impetus for change has come from the September 1988 release of the report of the Social Assistance Review Committee (SARC). This committee recommended sweeping reforms to Ontario's system of social assistance in the form of 274 specific recommendations. Although the provincial government ultimately approved the report, the implementation of the reforms will take some time. Some recommendations have been implemented and they are described in this report.

In general, the SARC reforms were designed to create one general system of social assistance in the Province by combining General Welfare Assistance and Family Benefits Assistance into one program. This new system would be simplified - the 22 different categories of recipients would be reduced to three:

1. disabled persons
2. people in need who must respond to an offer of "opportunity planning" (employment support programs)
3. people in need who are encouraged but not required to participate in "opportunity planning"

This new approach would pay more generous benefits which would be based upon "need" rather than upon arbitrary moral judgements about "deservedness". In addition, new support programs would also be introduced to assist clients in moving off social assistance through a process of "opportunity" planning. Social assistance would be recognized as a "right" of all citizens and variability from one municipality to another would be eliminated by having the province assume full funding responsibility. The other significant component of these reforms was the recommendation that an income supplementation program be introduced for the working poor.

In general, the SARC reforms were well received by groups and individuals who had been advocating for change in our systems of social assistance. The issues of dispute now tend to be concerned with the government's implementation of these recommendations.

This 1991 Update has been written with the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth as the geographic point of reference. The design of the Social Assistance System in Hamilton-Wentworth is not necessarily the same as other regions of the province. In sections of the text where other regions may vary, this point is stated explicitly.

The 1991 report also includes many Social Planning and Research Council's value judgements about the Social Assistance System. For example, the basic goals of an effective Social Assistance System include adequacy, accessibility and equity. Many public handbooks that describe how to apply for financial assistance, how to appeal decisions and what programs are available to individuals, do not usually contain statements of philosophy or values. Thus this report is meant to stimulate the reader's thoughts beyond mere descriptions into thinking about a "better" system of social assistance.

Mike Pennock,
Executive Director
August 1991

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Convert-To-Rent - Ontario offers interest free loans of between $5,000 and $7,000 per unit to help produce some 10,000 moderate-cost rental housing units primarily through conversions of non-residential building.

Co-ops - a collectively managed non-profit housing corporation which develops and self-manages a non-profit housing project containing rent-geared-to-income and market rent units.

Disabled - major physical or mental disability that severely limits an individual in carrying out daily living activities.

Employable (G.W.A) - a person is employable if he/she is physically able to be employed with no apparent barriers. The expectation is that a fully employable person should be placed in a job within three months of applying for G.W.A.

Hamilton C.M.A. - Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area includes the City of Hamilton, Stoney Creek, Dundas, Ancaster, Flamborough, Glanbrook, Burlington and Grimsby. (This is different from the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth which includes only the first six areas.)

Holistic View - no agreed-upon definition appears to exist in the literature but for our purposes holism refers to wholeness where a whole is irreducible to the sum of its parts. The social, psychological, health, spiritual, recreational, financial and emotional aspects of a person's life are considered integral to the individual. For example, an elderly person with an extreme case of arthritis should not be reduced to a medical problem because his/her social, psychological and recreational needs are affected too.

Income Maintenance System - in this report it is synonymous with social assistance system.

Liquid Assets - includes cash, money in back accounts and items which can readily be turned into cash (e.g., redeemable stocks and savings bonds).

Low-Rise Rehabilitation Program - offers landlords forgivable loans of up to $5,000 per unit to help them upgrade some 7,000 older low-rise apartments in Ontario over the next four years. Apartments must be in buildings of less than 5 storeys and must have been built prior to 1960.

Mixed Employment Approach - the proposed utilization of a variety of employment sectors (both private and public) for the purpose of employment creation.

Municipal Non-Profit Housing - municipally-based non-profit housing corporations which develop and maintain non-profit housing projects which contain rent-geared-to-income and market rent units.

Municipal Tax Base - includes taxes collected from citizens in a municipality, which in turn are made available to them if they are eligible for municipally funded programs.

Point Rating System - a point system employed by the local Housing Authority, designed to rate an individual's need for housing.

Poverty Line - refer to Appendix B for three different poverty line definitions.

P.U.E. (permanently unemployable) - a person who is able to carry out most day-to-day activities but is unable to work because of some medical difficulty that is expected to continue for a long time.

Private Non-Profit Housing - private non-profit housing corporations which develop and maintain non-profit housing projects, which contain rent-geared-to-income and market rent units.

Rent-Geared-To-Income - those units in housing projects which have rents set at levels such that tenants do not spend more than 30% of their gross income for rent.

Social Assistance System - this broad based term refers to programs which offer financial aid and/or support services to those citizens deemed in need. In this report a number of these programs are identified: Family Benefits Assistance (F.B.A.) is administered through the Ministry of Community and Social Services; General Welfare Assistance (G.W.A) is administered through Regional Government; GAINS-A, is administered through the province; and Guaranteed Income Supplement and Old Age Security are both administered through the federal government.

Social Housing - all units, whether rent-geared-to-income or market rent, provided through financial assistance from various government programs to non-profit private, community-based or public organizations.

Support Programs/Services - ideally, refers to a coordinated and integrated range of community-based services and programs that fulfil a variety of people's needs (e.g., financial, spiritual, recreational, social, psychological).

Unemployable (G.W.A.) - a person is unemployable if he/she has several barriers to employment including physical incapacity, serious mental or physical disability and/or other social problems. These barriers may be temporary or permanent. Examples include: a) a person who is certified by a medical practitioner as being unable to work due to physical or mental reasons; b) single parents who must remain in the home to care for dependent children, and; c) a person who is 55 years of age or older.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overriding Principle[1]

The Social Planning and Research Council (S.P.R.C.) believes that

> The goal of Ontario's social assistance programs should be to ensure that all Ontario residents have an adequate lifestyle characterized by adequate shelter, food, clothing and real opportunity to participate meaningfully in the life of their community (S.P.R.C., 1986).

This overriding principle is founded upon two separate but related beliefs. First it stems from a holistic view which demands that policies recognize human beings as whole entities with a continuum of needs rather than "parts" of entities with only one need. For example, to focus on an individual's financial needs without consideration for their shelter or nutritional needs means that only part of the individual is being cared for. Subsequently, even though this publication focuses on the Social Assistance System it must necessarily, from a holistic perspective, consider other essential issues that affect individuals who are in the Social Assistance System.

In the second instance, the S.P.R.C. principle challenges the historically conditioned concepts of "worthy" versus "unworthy" citizens by asserting that all people share a common set of needs, which must, at some basic level, be met. By arguing that all persons have a shared minimum set of needs, we position ourselves strongly on the side of adequacy in the debate over what does, or does not, constitute poverty. Needs for food, shelter, clothing and participation in the social life of a community are shared by citizens - as such, they are rights. The Social Assistance System must either embrace or be a component of a larger policy which recognizes and supports these fundamental rights. Shortfalls in income or service deny these basic rights and therefore, create inadequacy of lifestyle in terms of physical or social needs.

1.2 Adequacy

There has been extensive discussion in Canada on defining and counting the poor. The S.P.R.C. has opted for a definition of poverty based on the adequate

1 For S.P.R.C.'s list of recommendations sent to the Social Assistance Review Committee see Appendix A

budget approach and has rejected the more popular and more frequently used Statistics Canada Low Income Cut Off Point (which tends to use only estimates of minimum physiological needs while ignoring social needs).

The adequate budget approach assumes that all families regardless of income, require a similar stock of goods and services for their physical and social functioning and that these basic requirements can be satisfied at low to moderate costs regardless of what families at different levels actually spend. These basic requirements have been developed into standards, allowing local adequate budgets to also be developed.

Generally, the adequate budget level is greater than subsistence, but less than average. It suggests what a family/individual should spend to have an adequate lifestyle, characterized by both healthy physical and social functioning.

1.3 Meaningful Participation

Meaningful participation in community life can be characterized by a variety of subtle and not so subtle experiences. Participation in the "political" aspects of community life, or the inability to do so, is often a subtle process. Without an adequate income or other essential elements of economic well-being including some reasonable degree of security, a reliable source of income and even expectation of improvement or upward change, "... other aspects of well-being can seldom be fulfilled." (Canadian Council on Social Development, 1984).

In political terms this means that people can lose access to opportunities that improve their quality of life (e.g., opportunities provided through health and education). Children, as one result, may be unable to participate in special events at school such as sports day, special outings and hot dog day because of their extra cost.

Inadequate resources will limit people in other ways. A vital community provides for and encourages input from community members into those processes which affect them. People have control over their life and influence in the

community process. Without sufficient resources, this participation does not occur. Restricted access to housing, limited freedom of choice and limits on freedom of movement each represent diminishing control over one's life. The absence of newspapers, movies or annual vacations will distance people from the cultural life of their community and the information and experience necessary to participate equally in it. Add to this, the not so subtle inability to acquire meat, fresh fruits, sporting equipment, fitness and good health, and the result is an even greater distancing, even alienation, of people from opportunities for participation. Such limits create pressures which undermine any system otherwise designed to allow for meaningful participation.

2.0 BASIC GOALS OF AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

2.1 Adequacy, Accessibility and Equity

From the overriding principle outlined above, three important goals emerge. Since income is a key determinant in the purchase of goods and services which comprise an adequate lifestyle, the first goal for the Social Assistance System should be to:

> **GOAL 1:** ensure that all Ontario residents receive an income which ensures an adequate lifestyle.

Where incomes are insufficient to this task, either additional income must be generated or support services must be provided (e.g., affordable housing).

While income is a key factor, it may not be the only factor. Ensuring that individuals have access to the range of resources and services which will provide them with an adequate lifestyle is also important (e.g., health services, good education, counselling). The second goal of the Social Assistance System should be to:

> **GOAL 2:** ensure that all Ontario residents have access to the resources and services which can ensure an adequate lifestyle.

Even where there is sufficient income and effective access to resources and services, there remains the need to ensure that old notions of "deserving" and "undeserving", best typified by the classification of people into categories such as "employable" and "unemployable", be terminated. If an adequate lifestyle is held to be a right, as we have argued, then the third goal of our Social Assistance System should be to:

> **GOAL 3:** ensure equity in the delivery of services to all Ontario residents.

2.2 Current Impediments to Achieving These Goals

2.2.1 Chronic Poverty

Recipients of social assistance programs across Ontario have systematically been refused the right to an adequate lifestyle through receipt of incomes which place them in severe poverty. Figures 1 through 4 display the inadequate income levels offered by the various social assistance programs as well as the income earned by the working poor at minimum wage. The General Welfare Assistance (G.W.A) and Family Benefits Assistance (F.B.A.) consistently fall below the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off, the Canadian Council on Social Development (C.C.S.D.) Poverty Line and the S.P.R.C. Adequate Budget Levels on each figure. The Guaranteed Annual Income for the Disabled (GAINS-D) and the Old Age Security (O.A.S.) programs never reach the C.C.S.D. Poverty Line. The inadequacy of financial assistance through these programs is obvious. And if one considers the working poor, minimum wage is not enough to raise individuals beyond the lowest poverty line. Thus employment is not necessarily a solution for reducing low income.

Chronic, severe poverty occurs on a widespread basis in Ontario. Despite government attempts to upgrade incomes, our social assistance programs are failures. The issue at stake here is not whether poverty exists, but whether our community is prepared to tolerate its existence.

2.2.2 Inaccessibility of Services and Resources

Support services (whether they are day care, counselling or job retraining) are a fundamental component of a social assistance system if we view people holistically. Lack of access to such services can be a major block to an adequate lifestyle.

Lack of access may express itself in at least five ways: geographic inaccessibility, lack of services, income-related problems, access difficulties due to service fragmentation, and problems with access due to lack of information. Geographically, rural and northern areas typically tend to be under-serviced (e.g. women's shelters), although even urban areas may experience geographically determined access problems (e.g., restrictive zoning for adult residential care facilities). Inaccessibility may occur because services do not

FIGURE 1: MAXIMUM ANNUAL INCOME BY PROGRAM AND EMPLOYMENT - SINGLE ADULT, 1991

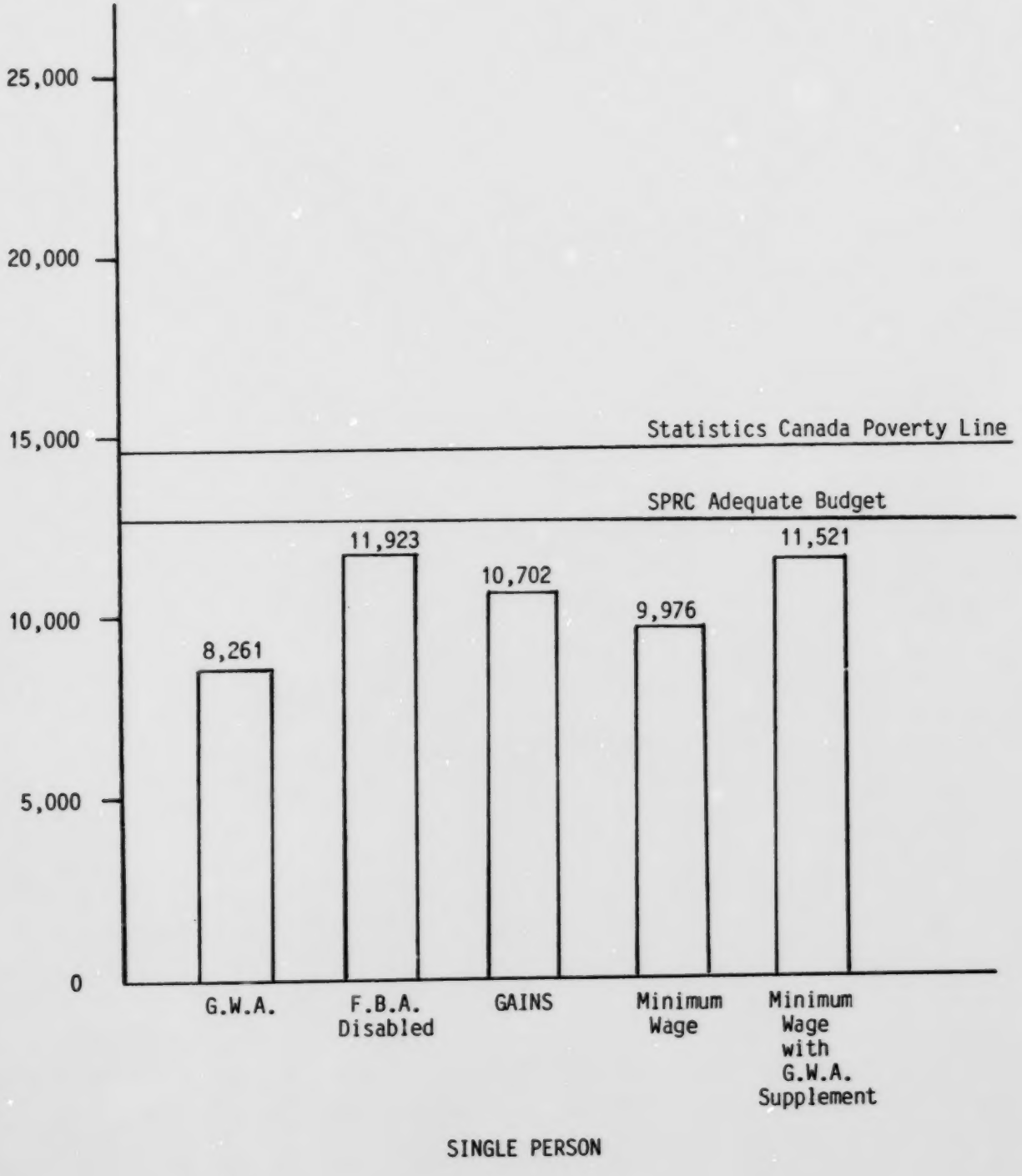


FIGURE 2: MAXIMUM ANNUAL INCOME BY PROGRAM: COUPLE WITH TWO CHILDREN, 1991

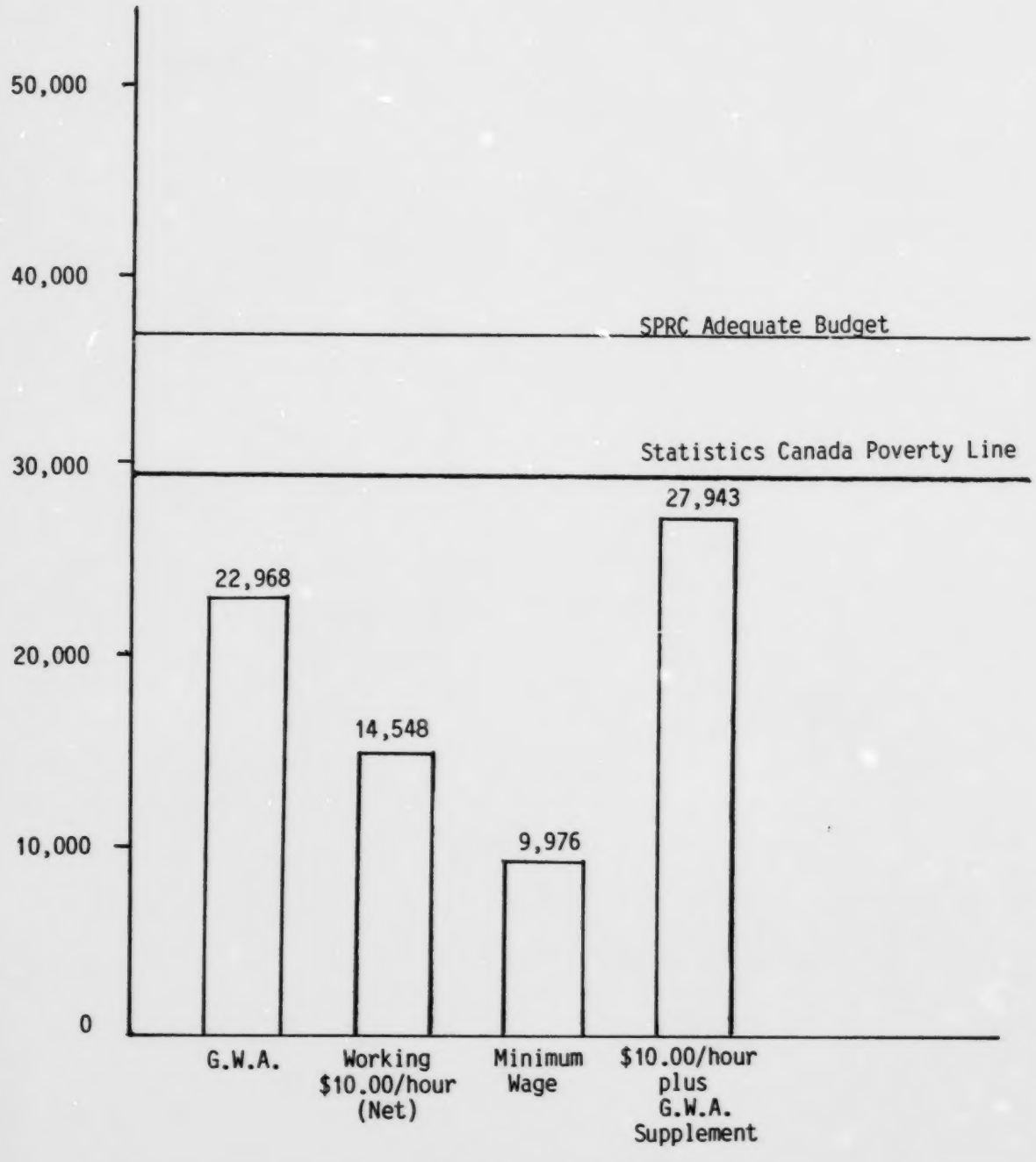


FIGURE 3: MAXIMUM ANNUAL INCOME BY PROGRAM: SINGLE PARENT, ONE CHILD, 1991

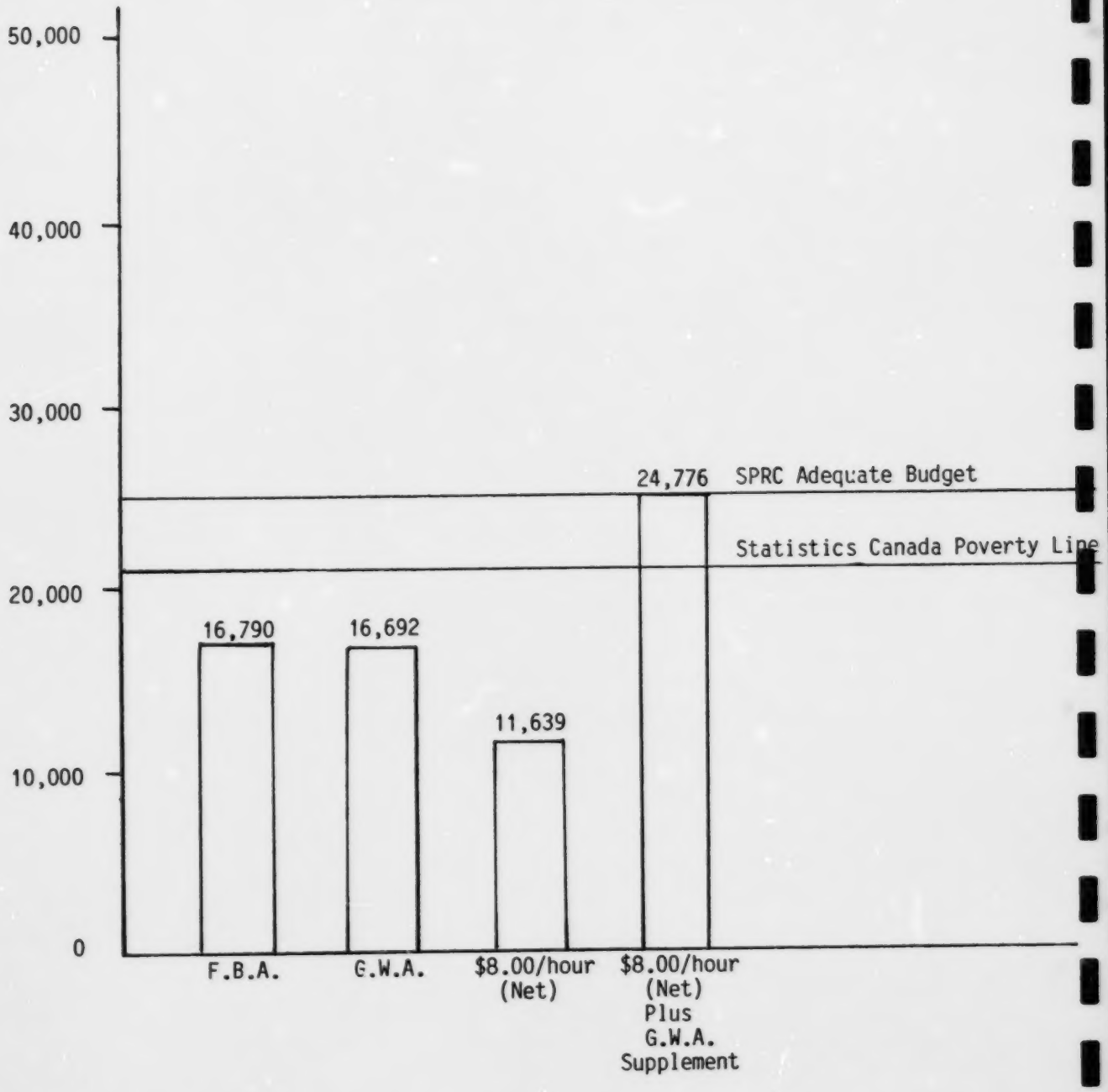


FIGURE 3: THE INCIDENCE OF CHILD POVERTY IN NINE INDUSTRIAL COUNTRIES MID-1980s

	% of Children
United States	18.0
Canada	13.4
Australia	13.1
United Kingdom	7.1
Netherlands	5.9
Switzerland	4.6
Norway	3.5
Sweden	3.1
West Germany	2.0

Source: Economic Council of Canada, Perspective 2000, 1988.

In Canada:

1. Low birthweight bodies are twice as common among the poor as among higher income people. Prematurity is also more common. Low birthrate and prematurity increase the likelihood of death during infancy, growth abnormalities, and lifelong disabilities such as retardation, vision and hearing complaints.

2. The child mortality rate is twice as high among families at the lowest income level than it is among families at the highest income.

3. Children from poor families are almost twice as likely to drop out of school as children from high income families.

4. Fifty to seventy-five percent of the children who are in the care of child welfare systems are from poor families.

exist (e.g., insufficient number of day care spaces), exist only marginally, or are over-taxed (e.g., waiting lists for counselling services). At times, lack of services may occur because they are delivered through voluntary agencies which may not exist in given communities; this is contrasted with communities rich with a sophisticated mix of public and private service systems. Insufficient income may block access to services (e.g., day care, where moderate income families are finding themselves forced out of the approved market into less expensive, poorer quality, informal arrangements). Fragmented delivery of services can lead to uncertainty about who is delivering what program, which makes access difficult, and simple lack of knowledge about the service system in general can impede successful access.

Where services cannot be accessed, quality of life (lifestyle) can be seriously damaged. The challenge, therefore, is to define the minimum range of support services necessary for ensuring adequacy of lifestyle for all residents of Ontario, and recommend mechanisms to ensure this minimum range is reached and sustained.

2.2.3 Inequity

The existence of inequities within programs and across programs is well documented. To take one example, a single woman with dependents may, over her life, start off on General Welfare (lowest allowance), shift to Family Benefits (a more generous allowance), shift back to General Welfare as an "employable" when her children are gone, shift to "unemployable" when she turns 55, and finally shift to O.A.S./G.I.S. (most generous allowance) when she turns 65. At each stage, some judgement about her "worthiness" as a recipient is made which bears no relationship to what her needs might actually be.

If, however, we approach the problem of income support from a perspective of adequacy, her "worth" as a recipient never changes - only her needs. Her right to an adequate income is upheld with no stigma or judgements attached to her particular circumstances.

2.3 New Initiatives in Ontario Intended to Help Reduce These Impediments

The Social Assistance Review Committee report (1988) argues convincingly for an increase in social assistance benefit rates and an increase in minimum wage. These increases would provide more adequate income levels for people and reduce the incidence of poverty in our communities. The challenge now is to implement these and other 'adequacy' recommendations in the face of government cutbacks.

The Premier's Council on Health Strategy Integration and Coordination (draft, 1990) explains the need for more accessible services and resources within the social and health service systems. The first principle states that

> devolved models of health and social services should provide Ontarians with access to a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated system of health and social services (p.4).

This principle includes the need for a comprehensive range of services as close to the client's home as possible, the need to minimize gaps in services and the need for flexibility to better serve the high-need client. This report also describes different models of service integration within the health and social service sectors that would reflect this principle.

In order to achieve equity in the health and social service systems for all people, regardless of their income levels, the same report notes that mechanisms should be put in place for local municipalities to address the needs of high risk groups as a high priority. Low income people are a high risk group for ill health. Lower socio-economic status is general associated with less satisfactory health and lower life expectancy (p.5).

It is hoped that with reports like the above two, changes like more adequate incomes, more accessible services and more equitable service delivery will become a reality.

3.0 THE SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

3.1 Overview of the Programs

Now that we have considered basic goals and impediments of the Social Assistance System we can consider three programs in more detail. The General Welfare Assistance (G.W.A.) program, the Family Benefits Assistance (F.B.A.) program and the Guaranteed Annual Income Supplement for the Aged will be explained here. The description of each program will also include a discussion of the significant issues as they relate to the goals outlined above.

3.2 General Welfare Assistance[2]

3.2.1 Overview

In its "Income Maintenance Handbook" the Ministry of Community and Social Services describes the General Welfare Assistance or 'welfare' as a program which:

> provides short-term financial help to pay for necessities when an individual or family suffers a temporary loss of income due to illness, unemployment or some other misfortune.

From its inception, the program was intended to be short-term, with rates established at a level which would cover only necessities. Rates were set sufficiently low enough to encourage recipients to seek work as a route off the program. This priority was further emphasized by the inclusion of regulations which require recipients classified as employable to demonstrate their readiness and willingness to work.

General Welfare Assistance is administered through the Regional Social Services office. Its funding is cost shared, 20% municipal (which in turn is dependant on the municipal tax base) and 80% federal/provincial (shared 50:30 respectively). The SARC report has recommended that municipalities be relieved of the cost of these programs.

2 The bulk of this information is taken from the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth's Department of Social Services document An Introduction to the Social Services Department and General Welfare Assistance and from personal communication with Carmen Salciccioli of the Social Services Department.

In the following sections, we explore the realities which challenge the assumptions and principles which have shaped the General Welfare system in Ontario: recipient classifications (employable vs. unemployable) are no longer appropriate; needs are no longer (if ever) short term; current payments don't even allow basic necessities to be met; the municipal tax base is already strained; inequality of availability and accessibility of services in rural versus urban centres exists, and; there are difficulties in providing incentives to work within the current system.

Generally, any resident of Ontario regardless of citizenship or length of residence may apply for G.W.A. The only stipulation which must be met is that the recipient be in financial need and not regularly employed. Therefore to be eligible for assistance a person might be:

1. unemployed and looking for work;
2. a mother supporting children alone;
3. private foster parent;
4. sick and not receiving sick benefits;
5. disabled or blind and not receiving F.B.A.;
6. elderly but not receiving O.A.S.;
7. attending high school but living independently of family;
8. in an unusual situation of distress;
9. under 18 years of age - in exceptional circumstances of family breakdown.

The Social Services Department operates a phone-in system. The application process may be initiated via this route. However, applications for assistance are generally completed in the applicant's home.

At prescribed intervals, a Social Services Worker will visit the client's home to determine continuing eligibility. As well, a monthly statement of income must be completed by clients as a measure of continuing eligibility.

Employable clients are required to be actively searching for employment. Although the number of required job search efforts may vary with individual situations, generally 10 searches a week is considered satisfactory. Telephone calls and letters are not considered adequate searches. Job search efforts are

recorded on a job search list for review by a case worker. The client is expected to accept any legal full-time employment although each situation is evaluated individually.

Appeals can be made at two levels: a) The Internal Department Appeal or b) Social Assistance Review Board. In both instances, the client is informed of their right to have a local advocacy group assist them in the appeal process.

The Internal Department Appeal is reviewed through the following hierarchy:

a) the worker's supervisor;
b) the Area Manager;
c) the Director of Income Maintenance;
d) the Commissioner of Social Services.

In the event that assistance is denied after this appeal, the next appeal process is through the Social Assistance Review Board. There are time limits to the appeal process.

Within the G.W.A. system there are additional forms of assistance which may or may not be available. G.W.A. recipients receive free medical/hospital insurance as well as coverage for prescription drugs. The availability of other forms of assistance depends on both the individual situation and the funds and resources specific to the particular municipality. For instance, the municipal funds available in Hamilton-Wentworth will allow the cost of dentures to be subsidized whereas this does not occur in the Niagara region.

One such benefit is referred to as 'Special Assistance' and is available to G.W.A. recipients and people who are not receiving any form of government assistance. This benefit is designed to cover the costs of extraordinary expenses. These may include dental services, prosthetic appliances including eye glasses, and prescribed drugs.

'Supplementary Aid' is another non-mandatory program of G.W.A. This program provides additional assistance for people who are already receiving F.B.A., Old Age Security (O.A.S.), GAINS, Spouses Allowance or a training allowance from Vocational Rehabilitation Services. This additional assistance

can cover the cost of items included within the auspices of 'Special Assistance', but may also include such expenses as unusually high shelter costs and other special living expenses.

Work Incentive Allowances may also be available. This allowance is paid to participants in approved work activity programs. These municipally-operated job preparation programs may be available in some municipalities for people who have some mental, emotional or other difficulty that prevents them from getting or holding a job.

3.2.2 Long-Term Receipt of G.W.A.

General Welfare Assistance (G.W.A.) was originally intended asthe main income maintenance program for people who are in short term or emergency need. But, this theoretically short-term benefit has become the primary source of income over the long term for some people. But, the long-term impacts of the recession have added new groups such as technologically-displaced and older workers to traditional long-term G.W.A. recipient groups (e.g., youth, ex-psychiatric patients, partially disabled and older single, divorced and separated women). In a 1986 Social Planning and Research Council study of unattached women over 40 (Csiernik and Rempel, 1986), of 192 respondents, 58 (30.2%) had been in receipt of General Welfare Assistance for one to two years, 41 (21.4%) for three to five years and 30 (15.6%) for 6 or more years. Another Social Planning and Research Council study (Csiernik, 1987) questioned teenagers receiving G.W.A. in order to be able to complete high school. Of 102 teens, 29 (28.4%) had been beneficiaries for more than one year.

3.2.3 Employment

When single individuals are added to the G.W.A. caseload, they are classified as either "employable" or "unemployable". "Employables" are characterized as those free of any serious disability or health problem. "Unemployables" often have minor health problems or disabilities, though not severe enough to warrant a disability allowance, or are 55 years of age or older. Those circumstances combined with a lack of skills, experience or education drastically reduce a recipients chance of actively competing in the employment market. Thus, "unemployables" are not necessarily physically

unemployable but rather may be socially unemployable. Despite the emphasis on distinguishing between employable and unemployable, the classification translates to a minimal $8.00 per month more in assistance for the "unemployable" client.

The report of the Social Assistance Review Committee recommended that these categories be eliminated. The underlying principle of these reforms was that allowances should be based upon an arbitrary judgement of the extent to which a client "deserves" to receive assistance. This would include the elimination of differences between G.W.A. and F.B.A. rates when these programs are combined into one system of social assistance.

A common misconception is that welfare recipients do not want to work, even though the opposite has repeatedly been demonstrated. Of 103 teen clients surveyed, 91 (88.3%) had actively searched for either full-time, part-time or summer employment since they turned 16 (Csiernik, 1987:Appendix B). When women over 40 (Csiernik and Rempel, 1986:C-28) were asked why they were not presently employed, only four of the 429 answers (representing 177 respondents) were "not interested in working" (0.9% of responses; 2.3% of respondents). Of the 196 women surveyed, 167 (85.2%) had worked in the past, while 27 (16.2%) were still working to supplement their benefits.

Under previous General Welfare Assistance regulations, a single recipient was permitted to earn $50 per month and 25% of excess earnings before money was deducted from their allowance. This extra $600.00 annual incentive still placed a single employable 43.5% below 1988 Estimated Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point and 48.1% below the 1988 S.P.R.C. Adequate Budget Level. Similarly, the head of a family living with a spouse was permitted to earn $100.00 including the spouse's income. As well, 25% of excess earnings was exempt[3].

3 Refer to Appendix C for General Welfare Assistance rates in Hamilton-Wentworth for August 1991.

If a single person earned $100 in a month, he/she would net $62.50. If the client was allowed to keep this deducted $450/annum ($37.50 x 12 months), he/she would still be approximately 38% below the estimated 1988 Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point.

Although the G.W.A. allowance has supposedly been set low enough to encourage recipients to seek work, it is doubtful that this form of incentive actually works. A single individual working a 35 hour week for minimum wage ($4.55/hour) will earn about $9,976 per year after deductions. This represents approximately a $1,700 increase over what they would receive on G.W.A. but he or she would not be eligible for a number of non-monetary benefits which are available to G.W.A recipients. To counter this traditional problem, a "top-up" program has been introduced which use G.W.A. funds to "top-up" the incomes of the working poor. This program will increase the income of the single minimum wage worker $11,521 (see page 6).

This represents a significant improvement over the income that would be received by this individual from G.W.A. ($8,261) or from a minimum wage job ($9,976). It therefore introduces an important employment incentive at a cost which is substantially less than the cost of a full G.W.A. allowance.

The Social Planning and Research Council's One Year Evaluation of the Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Social Services Teen Worker Programme (Csiernik, 1987) certainly provides examples of the inadequacy of previous work incentives as stated by respondents.

> "Constructive tangible programs (are needed) for persons to leave welfare assistance and go back to work without being financially penalized. ... At times I have had to shoplift foods to live on. ... I find that if I start even a part-time job to get back (in)to the work force its impossible to just pay rent. The Welfare states if I earn over $50.00 a month some is deducted from my assistance. Yet to go to and from work, bus fare costs. Its not too encouraging to work and receive less earnings than if I were to stay in my stagnant situation. How can I do better? HOW CAN I GET OFF WELFARE?"

> "If you can find yourself part-time work, you should be permitted to keep (all) the money considering you found yourself the job and could improve your living standard with the money."

> "(Regional Social Services should) provide an incentive to work by providing information about employment and not deducting such a high percentage."

These findings and comments are not surprising as the literature re-confirms that recipients prefer to work. In an article entitled "20,000 Choose Paycheck Over Welfare Check", Charles Atkins (1986:21) describes the state of Massachusetts' attitude and approach:

> "Forcing welfare recipients to take minimum wage jobs and forcing them off the welfare rolls will not work."

What has succeeded in Massachusetts is a program providing <u>choices</u>. The program, entitled "ET" - Employment and Training choices, allows recipients to choose their own way into the labour force. "ET" provides a series of co-ordinated options including basic education, skills training, on-the-job-training and job placement. It also encourages participants to only select work that provides a wage adequate to support the individual and his/her family. Atkins (1986:22) states

> "The program has proven that welfare recipients do want to work; that they are excellent, highly motivated employees; and that they have aspirations the same as anyone else."

Similar findings were made in Maine where 66% of 4,500 welfare recipients placed in jobs were still working one to two years later (Petit and Wilcox, 1986:14). In San Diego, 5,350 of 11,600 (46.1%) welfare claimants involved in the city's job placement program found and maintained private sector, non-government subsidized jobs (Bacon, 1986:29). The common element throughout the American programs was the clients' ability to choose their way back into the workforce along with the availability of jobs providing adequate incomes.

The lack of incentives within the G.W.A. system was recognized by SARC and a major thrust of their reforms involved the provision of programs and financial assistance to help recipients across employment. A number of the recommendations pertaining to financial assistance were implemented by the province through a new program entitled "Support to Employment Program" or STEP. This program was introduced in October 1989. The principal initiatives included:

1. An increase of approximately $128.82 for each working G.W.A. recipient in "top-up" payments and an increase in the number of recipients who will be eligible for "top-up".
2. The exemption of training allowances from the calculation of benefit entitlement and a further deduction of $110 per month for expenses related to training. This reform means that G.W.A. recipients will be able to keep their training allowances rather than having them deducted from their G.W.A. benefit.
3. Special benefits of up to $250 per month for work related expenses for persons obtaining employment.
4. The advance payment of up to $360 per child for child care expenses during the first month of employment.

The committee also recommended a major expansion in supportive employment and counselling programs under the name of "Opportunity Planning". Although the provincial government adopted the SARC report, they have been very slow to implement this set of reforms and this represents a growing source of concern to social advocates.

During the fall of 1990, the Minister of Community and Social Services appointed an Advisory Group on New Social Assistance Legislation to advise her about the further implementation of SARC reforms. Their report - Back on Track - was published in March 1991 and recommended a number of sweeping changes. These changes and their impact upon Hamilton-Wentworth are described in Appendix F to this report. All of this descriptive material is reproduced from a July 1991 memo to the Regional Health and Social Services Committee from Michael Schuster, Commissioner of Social Services.

3.2.4 Payments and Poverty

Adequacy is a key element lacking from the current provincial system. Figures 1 through 4, previously discussed, illustrate that social assistance levels fall far short of poverty and adequacy levels regardless of the reason for receipt or family size.

Since receiving General Welfare Assistance, 75 of 102 (73.5%) teens attending school required additional assistance. Thirty-three (45.2%) stated they had needed food, 30 (41.1%) clothing, nine (12.3%) shelter and 47 (64.4%) additional money. Seventy-eight (80.4%) of 97 students replied that the money they are allotted does not last the month (Csiernik, 1987:Appendix B). Similar results were found in the study examining unattached women over 40 in receipt of General Welfare Assistance (Csiernik and Rempel, 1986:C-30,31). Of 189 respondents, 155 (82.0%) had required additional assistance to supplement their monthly allowance. Sixty-eight (43.9%) had received food, 36 (23.2%) clothing, sixteen (10.3%) shelter and 59 (38.1%) money. However, 48 (31.0%) women who had reported requiring additional assistance since being added to the G.W.A. caseload had received nothing despite their needs.

Allowance levels, particularly those of General Welfare Assistance were set low to discourage dependence. In reality, the system has produced long-term recipients living in chronic poverty. The following statements were made by Csiernik and Rempel's survey respondents in 1986.

> "I cannot survive on $335.00 per month. How do we buy gifts for our children on special occasions or buy our food and clothing? It is no wonder I am depressed."
>
> "My bills exceed my Welfare Allowance ... (I'm left) about $20.00 per month for personal needs."
>
> "Most people think no matter the amount of rent cost, the welfare (department) pays it. They pay a percentage toward it, and the rest comes out of the food money they provide."

In Hamilton-Wentworth, an employable person received the maximum G.W.A. allowance fell 48.9% below the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point and 53.1% below the S.P.R.C. Adequate Budget Level. An unemployable, by definition unable to supplement his/her income by working, would receive a maximum income of $5,700 in 1988; this is $96.00 more than an employable. The income of the unemployable person falls 48.1% below the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point and 52.4% below the S.P.R.C. Adequate Budget Level (see Figures 1 - 2). Survey respondents made the following statements (Csiernik and Rempel, 1986:D-1, D-2, D-3):

"I want to know how a person is supposed to live on $295.00 a month (after rent) and keep their home (and) pay taxes, hydro, phone, food, clothes."

"How can I ask for more help with money when they (Regional Social Services) have so many people to look after. At least I can pay my rent and my children are trying to provide me with the food."

"I only have (enough) assistance for food and shelter. No money for clothes or transportation."

The SARC reforms recognized the general inadequacy of current benefit levels. A number of initiatives were recommended to combat this problem.

Firstly, they recommended that benefit levels be based on a "market-basket" approach which would reflect the actual costs of basic goods rather than upon arbitrary levels set by the provincial government.

They also recommended an increase of 25% in benefit levels to close the gap between benefits and the poverty line. A number of increases were implemented by the provincial government in 1989 although it expected that these increases will fall short of the committee's goals. The principal increases were as follows:

1. An "across the board" increase of 6%.
2. Higher shelter allowances.
3. Increase in G.W.A. children's rates to equalize with F.B.A. It was expected that the average family would experience an increase of $74 per month.
4. A back-to-school clothing allowance.

The problems of the working poor were also addressed by the SARC report through the recommended implementation of an "income supplementation" program for people working at minimum wage. This program would effectively introduce a "guaranteed income" program within the province of Ontario. The province has not yet acted on this reform.

3.2.5 Shelter Subsidy

Another issue is the method the province uses to determine shelter subsidies. This system forces recipients to use money theoretically allocated for food and clothing to cover housing costs. In reality, the basic allowance is being used to supplement this inadequate shelter subsidy scheme.

This system affects not only G.W.A. clients but also GAINS-D and F.B.A. beneficiaries. For example, for a single person on G.W.A. in a 1 bedroom apartment, the threshold level was set at $120.00. The threshold level was the rent level above which the client would receive a shelter subsidy. He/she would receive a subsidy up to a maximum of $159.00 a month. Eighty percent of the rent above the threshold was also paid as part of the subsidy (an example follows below).

In October 1987, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (C.M.H.C.) reported that the average monthly rent for a one bedroom apartment in Hamilton-Wentworth was $362.00. However, this figure is indicative of units which are occupied; the figure which represents those vacant apartments may be higher ($377 - $425) (Fischbuch, 1988).

Using the C.M.H.C. figure:

average monthly rent = $362.00

subsidy calculation:

$362 - 120 = $242.00

$242 x 0.80 = $193.60

however maximum allowable subsidy = $159.00

difference subsidy:

actual rent = $120.00 + ($242.00 - 159.00)

$120.00 + $83.00 = $203.00

% of rent unsubsidized: $\frac{\$203.00}{\$362.00} \times 100 = 56.1\%$

TOTAL VALUE OF MONTHLY PAYMENTS & BENEFITS – GWA as of January 1991

		Single Employable		A Couple with 1 child		A Couple with 2 children		A Couple with 3 children	
		Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $	Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $	Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $	Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $
Social Assistance Payments									
Basic Allowance		233	2,796	659	7,908	827	9,924	995	11,940
Total Shelter Allowance	1	385	4,620	660	7,920	715	8,580	770	9,240
Back-to-School Benefit	2	0	0	10	123	21	246	31	369
Winter Clothing Benefit	2	0	0	9	102	17	204	26	306
Sub-Total		$618	$7,416	$1,338	$16,053	$1,580	$18,954	$1,821	$21,855
Other Cash Benefits									
Ontario Tax Credits *	3	31	374	34	409	34	406	34	403
Family Allowance	4	0	0	34	407	68	814	102	1,221
Child Tax Credit *	5	0	0	48	575	96	1,150	144	1,725
GST Credit *	6	18	215	40	480	48	580	57	680
Sub-Total		$49	$589	$156	$1,871	$246	$2,951	$336	$4,030
Total Cash Payments		$667	$8,005	$1,494	$17,924	$1,825	$21,905	$2,157	$25,885
In-kind Benefits									
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses	7	21	256	59	705	89	1,063	107	1,279
Sub-Total		$21	$256	$59	$705	$89	$1,063	$107	$1,279
TOTAL VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS		$688	$8,261	$1,552	$18,630	$1,914	$22,968	$2,264	$27,164

1 Maximum Shelter Allowance is paid to those clients whose shelter and shelter-related costs are at or above specified limits.

2 Both Winter Clothing Benefits and Back-to-School Allowances for children are paid once a year. Back-to-School Allowance varies by age.

3 The Ontario Tax Credit is an annual payment. The amount of credit is for the 1990 taxation year, payable in 1991.

4 The federal Family Allowance is a monthly payment.

5 The federal Child Tax Credit is paid in two installments; the credit is for the 1990 taxation year, payable in 1990 (prepayment) and 1991.

6 The federal Goods and Services Tax Credit is a quarterly payment. The amount of credit is for the 1991 taxation year, payable in 1991.

7 Based on average costs for all cases.

* All tax credits are estimates only.

** Note that all children are assumed to be 13 and over.

Prepared: Apr-91

The long-term problems associated with social assistance was further reflected by the increasing dependence of beneficiaries on food banks. Allowances are supposed to provide adequate finances to purchase the basic necessities including food and shelter. Again, the reality of the situation is much different. Although, in Hamilton-Wentworth approximately nine agencies currently supply food on request, the general consensus is that the need is still not being met and even more importantly, despite the area's strong employment picture, the need is not going away.

The SARC report recommended a new approach to calculating subsidy allowances. In recognizing that many recipients paid up to 70% of their allowance on shelter, the committee recommended that clients be reimbursed for the full cost of their rent, up to a ceiling based on average shelter costs in an community.

As a result of these recommendations, the following shelter ceilings were implemented in January 1990.

Family Size	Shelter Ceiling
1	$350
2	550
3	600
4	650
5	700
6+	725

It was anticipated that the "average" recipient would experience increases ranging from $57.00 to $94.00 per month as a result of this reform. In September 1989, it was estimated that 3,500 recipients in Hamilton-Wentworth would benefit from this reform.

3.2.6 Fraud

Another serious misconception regarding social assistance is that many recipients are defrauding the system. Headlines such as "Cracking Down on Welfare Fraud", as appeared in the Hamilton Spectator on October 18, 1986, do

little to dispel these beliefs. However, the reality is far removed from this perception.

Little has been written on welfare fraud in Canada. While the 1985 Nielson Commission asked provinces to report on welfare abuse (Task Force on Program Review, 1986:30), the replies were not published. Several American studies have reported the incidence of welfare fraud:

- fraud was estimated to account for 3% of the approximately six billion dollars lost by the Health, Education and Welfare (H.E.W.) Department in 1978 (Young, 1983:362).

- San Joaquin County, California food stamp fraud investigation (1982) found of 5,622 monitored clients suspected of abuse, 560 (9.7%) received overpayments. Of those, 450 (80.4%) returned their overpayment upon notification. One hundred and ten, or two percent, of monitored clients were prosecuted (Greenberg, 1984:38).

- while some authorities assume 30 - 50% of Assistance for Dependent Children recipients (equivalent to parts of Ontario's Family Benefits Assistance program) are involved in fraud, official rates remain at three to five percent (Hutton, 1979:46).

Table 1 details 1987 statistics from the Hamilton-Wentworth General Welfare Assistance Eligibility Review Department. As other studies have indicated, only an extremely small minority of welfare claimants actively engage in fraud. Of the total complaints lodged in 1987 (2,942), only 3.4% (99) resulted in actual fraud charges. While fraud cannot be tolerated, the pursuit to catch those who abuse the system can overshadow the real problem - the poverty of all recipients.

> "I'm glad people are interested in helping us (teenagers receiving G.W.A.) and I hope (they) realize that not all people on Welfare are drug addicts, alcoholics and no-ambition slobs. Some of us, like myself, are on welfare to escape those problems and to further myself by going to college." (Csiernik, 1987)

3.2.7 Municipal Tax Base

When General Welfare Assistance caseloads dramatically increase as they did in the early 1980's, local municipalities become hard pressed to meet their financial obligations of providing 20% of the program's costs. Past cost overruns in Hamilton-Wentworth's General Welfare Assistance budgets of approximately $6,000,000, led the Regional Municipality to seek emergency

assistance from the provincial government. During such a crisis, local municipalities are not in positions to fund their mandatory percentage of General Welfare Assistance unless they cut back and even eliminate funds to other discretionary social services, voluntary agencies or other departmental budgets. It is at times when Regional Municipalities have the greatest demands that their local economies are least able to provide the mandatory contribution.

In recognition of this problem, SARC recommended that municipal government be relieved of their financial responsibilities for G.W.A. This recommendation was also made by the more recent Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review Committee (PMSSR).

The later group recommended that social assistance benefits be fully funded by the province with the possibility of cost-sharing with municipalities for "administration". Under these recommendations, the current F.B.A. and G.W.A. programs would be combined into one social assistance program, to be administered by the municipality based upon full-funding by the province. It is widely expected that this will be implemented within the next two years.

The only 'mandatory' aspect of G.W.A. is the actual benefit itself. This does not vary between municipalities. Any other aspect that may be associated with this assistance is 'optional' and depends on need and funds available. For example, special assistance, incentives, exemptions and emergency hostels are not mandatory. These discretionary services are therefore unequally distributed; they are concentrated in municipalities which can afford them and therefore inaccessible to areas that may be most in need.

Full provincial funding for social assistance is expected to eliminate these differences.

3.2.8 SARC: One Year Later

The Ontario SARC Network is a group of concerned agencies and individuals which was established to monitor the implementation of the SARC reforms. Their conclusion, at the end of the first year of SARC implementation were as follows:

TABLE 1: 1987 REGIONAL SOCIAL SERVICES CASELOAD FRAUD COMPLAINTS AND CHARGES ELIGIBILITY REVIEW DEPARTMENT YEAR:1987

	Complaints			Lost Monies		Overpayments		Fraud	
Month	Assets/ Income	Living Conditions	General Referrals	Inter-viewed	Granted	Cases	Amt to be Recovered	Charges Laid	Accident Agreement
JANUARY	38	36	158	40	0	62	$36,059.48	4	6
FEBRUARY	34	40	134	28	1	49	$37,512.80	9	7
MARCH	31	47	181	31	1	46	$21,163.61	7	3
APRIL	33	40	209	22	0	55	$31,460.86	14	5
MAY	29	30	199	23	1	45	$22,494.23	12	10
JUNE	36	36	214	29	2	86	$33,520.75	14	10
JULY	40	30	193	27	1	49	$29,964.14	9	8
AUGUST	38	29	178	28	1	67	$31,838.01	8	5
SEPTEMBER	32	40	189	39	0	55	$28,302.17	8	8
OCTOBER	28	37	161	25	0	48	$19,541.21	6	5
NOVEMBER	24	15	150	31	1	47	$23,889.33	5	5
DECEMBER	34	21	178	24	2	72	$48,248.54	3	7
TOTALS	397	401	2,144	347	10	681	$363,995.13	99	79

July 1987 Caseload = 6,512

TOTAL COMPLAINTS: 2144 + 397 + 401 = 2,942

% OF TOTAL COMPLAINTS WHICH RESULT IN FRAUD CHARGES: $\frac{99}{2942} \times 100 = 3.4\%$

(Source: Social Services Department of the Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth)

- The 6% social assistance increase has made a significant difference to recipients (The Daily Bread Food Bank in Metro Toronto reports a drop from 72% to 65% in the proportion of welfare recipients using food banks in the first few months of 1990).

- The increase in the shelter allowance is seen as a very important change given the high cost of housing throughout the province. There does, however, remain a problem for many of affording the first and last month rent requirement for tenancy.

- STEP provisions are also considered to be a major support to social assistance recipients, although it seems to have primarily benefitted those who already had part-time employment. Unemployed people have not generally received additional support to help them get jobs.

- A major concern remains municipal variation in determining eligibility for social assistance. Some use the categoric and some use the budgetary approach. The categoric approach excludes many single and underemployed people who are having difficulty getting by.

- The working poor who are not on social assistance remain essentially unaided by the first year reforms and their situation worsens as they depend on wages too low to get them near the poverty line.
- There is growing impatience and anxiety about the development of opportunity planning.

- There is not generally a good grasp of the provisions of SARC reform in the community and this includes poor understanding among many service providers who work with social assistance recipients daily.

- Northern municipalities have been expressing apprehensions about what additional costs SARC reform will eventually place on their limited tax bases (The just released Report of the Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review recommends that the province assume full funding

responsibility for social assistance which would alleviate this concern, if implemented.)

3.3 Family Benefits Assistance[4]

3.3.1 Overview

Family Benefits Assistance (F.B.A.) is a provincial program that provides extended financial assistance to families and individuals who need help with living expenses. The program is administered through the nearest Ministry of Community and Social Services office and because of its long term nature, provides benefits at levels slightly above those of G.W.A. (see Figures 1 to 4). However, this difference in benefits is not significant and in reality F.B.A. recipients face poverty in much the same way G.W.A. recipients do. In fact, F.B.A. recipients may be further at risk with respect to seeking employment, due to both their lack of employability (magnified by extended absences from the work force) and need for particular support services (e.g., child care and training). The SARC reforms will effectively eliminate any differences in benefit rates.

To be eligible for F.B.A. the applicant must be in financial need and:

1. elderly - 65 or older and not eligible for O.A.S. (Old Age Security), Spouses Allowance, or GAINS-A; or
2. a parent raising children alone; or
3. disabled (permanently), blind or permanently unemployable (P.U.E.) - This allowance is know as Guaranteed Annual Income System for the Disabled (GAINS-D) and also includes females 60 - 64 years old; or
4. a low or middle income family looking after a severely disabled child at home. This type of assistance is known as the Handicapped Children's Benefit and applies to children under 18 years of age; or
5. foster parents with foster children - A person having care of a child who is not under the care of a Children's Aid Society.

4 A bulk of this information is taken from the Ministry of Community and Social Services Income Maintenance Handbook and personal communication with Dave Aquin of the Hamilton Office of the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Residence requirements must also be met. The recipient must be living in Ontario but does not have to be a Canadian citizen. A sponsored immigrant may only be considered if his/her sponsor is no longer able to provide for his/her needs; the sponsor is generally responsible for 5 years.

In addition to the above criteria, the applicant's financial need must be established before he/she becomes a F.B.A. recipient. First, liquid assets must be below a certain level based on family size. The second step in determining financial need, is to calculate the applicant's income. For example, this may include earnings, gifts, pensions, and rental or boarder income. However, for the purpose of Family Benefits, some income does not count at all (for example, inexpensive gifts and federal family allowance), some counts in full (for example Canada Pension, Unemployment Insurance and support payments) and some income counts in part (e.g., maintenance allowance paid under a training program or money received from a person who rents a self contained place from the applicant).

One of the major considerations in calculating need is living accommodations for which different circumstances will affect a person's needs. In fact, recipients are divided into 3 groups to determine cost of living needs: 1. renting or owning;

2. boarding; and
3. living in an institution.

If income and liquid assets are less than the legislated limits, the applicant is then considered to be in financial need and therefore eligible for Family Benefit Assistance.

Application for Family Benefits will be completed only by an income maintenance worker or other person approved by the Ministry. In most cases the worker will visit the applicant in his/her home to complete the application. Applicants are responsible for supplying all the necessary documents for themselves and their family. These documents include: proof of age, marital status, expenses, income and assets (for the past 3 years). Depending on the individual circumstances a completed medical form may also be required.

If an application is rejected or benefits reduced or stopped, the client may appeal to the Director of Ministry of Community and Social Services and if he/she is still dissatisfied, may appeal to the Social Assistance Review Board. The individual must request a hearing with this board where it is the applicant's responsibility to make his/her case with the aid of documents, witnesses, or legal assistance.

In addition to the financial assistance provided to F.B.A. recipients, these clients receive other non-monetary benefits:

1. free health insurance (O.H.I.P.);
2. drug assistance;
3. dental card - free basic dental care from dentist of recipients' choice;
4. home repairs - for home owners;
5. eye glasses, hearing aids;
6. back to school allowance - paid in August for school going dependent children who have reached four years of age by December 31 of that year.
7. diet allowance (i.e., diabetic);
8. fuel or shelter supplement;
9. winter clothing allowance for dependent children (in October/November 1988, the benefit will be increased 5% to $84);
10. other services - these may be provided or can be arranged by the Ministry (e.g., referral to other organizations, supply services, day care and homemaking services).

3.3.2 Longer Term Assistance - Longer Term Poverty

While the Family Benefits Act intended to provide long-term financial assistance for people unable to work, the reality is that recipients face a longer term of poverty.

"An Examination of Unattached Women Over 40 Receiving General Welfare Assistance in Hamilton-Wentworth" (Csiernik and Rempel, 1986:C-24) reported 105 of the 192 respondents (54.7%) had received F.B.A. prior to being shifted onto General Welfare Assistance caseloads. Of those 105, 27 (25.7%) had received benefits for one to four years, 33 (31.4%) for five to nine years, and 36 (34.3%) for 10 or more years. Figures 1 to 4 indicate that the financial assistance

TOTAL VALUE OF MONTHLY PAYMENTS & BENEFITS - FBA as of January 1991

		Single Disabled		Single Parent with 1 child		Single Parent with 2 children		Single Parent with 3 children	
		Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $	Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $	Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $	Maximum Monthly $	Maximum Annual $
Social Assistance Payments									
Basic Allowance		501	6,012	602	7,224	753	9,036	921	11,052
Total Shelter Allowance	1	385	4,620	605	7,260	660	7,920	715	8,580
Back-to-School Benefit	2	0	0	10	123	21	246	31	369
Winter Clothing Benefit	2	0	0	9	102	17	204	26	306
Sub-Total		$886	$10,632	$1,226	$14,709	$1,451	$17,406	$1,692	$20,307
Other Cash Benefits									
Ontario Tax Credits *	3	26	310	27	323	27	324	27	321
Family Allowance	4	0	0	34	407	68	814	102	1,221
Child Tax Credit *	5	0	0	48	575	96	1,150	144	1,725
GST Credit *	6	23	279	32	380	40	480	48	580
Sub-Total		$49	$589	$140	$1,685	$231	$2,768	$321	$3,848
Total Cash Payments		$935	$11,221	$1,366	$16,394	$1,681	$20,174	$2,013	$24,155
In-kind Benefits									
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses	7	58	702	33	396	59	705	85	1,015
Sub-Total		$58	$702	$33	$396	$59	$705	$85	$1,015
TOTAL VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS		$994	$11,923	$1,399	$16,790	$1,740	$20,880	$2,097	$25,169

1 Maximum Shelter Allowance is paid to those clients whose shelter and shelter-related costs are at or above specified limits.

2 Both Winter Clothing Benefits and Back-to-School Allowances for children are paid once a year. Back-to-School Allowance varies by age.

3 The Ontario Tax Credit is an annual payment. The amount of credit is for the 1990 taxation year, payable in 1991.

4 The federal Family Allowance is a monthly payment.

5 The federal Child Tax Credit is paid in two instalments; the credit is for the 1990 taxation year, payable in 1990 (prepayment) and 1991.

6 The federal Goods and Services Tax Credit is a quarterly payment. The amount of credit is for the 1991 taxation year, payable in 1991.

7 Based on average costs for all cases.

* All tax credits are estimates only.

** Note that all children are assumed to be 13 and over.

Prepared: Apr-91

provided under the sponsorship of F.B.A. is not significantly greater than that of G.W.A. despite the intended long-term nature of the program. In 1991 in Hamilton-Wentworth, a single parent with one child under the age of 9 receiving the maximum F.B.A. benefit of $16,790 (which includes maximum shelter subsidy) will fall 17% below the Estimated Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point for 1988 and 32% below the S.P.R.C. Adequate Budget level.

3.3.3 The Disabled and Other Special Cases

The Family Benefits Act also provides assistance for certain groups who are classified as unable to work - the disabled, permanently unemployable persons (P.U.E.'s), women in receipt of social assistance between the ages of 60 - 64 (but not men of the same age - they remain on G.W.A. caseloads). This assistance is known as the Guaranteed Annual Income System for the Disabled or GAINS-D. It provides its recipients with slightly higher benefit levels than corresponding F.B.A. recipients. In 1988, a single person belonging to any of the above mentioned groups of employment disadvantaged received a maximum GAINS-D allowance (including maximum shelter subsidy) of $8,316 in 1988. This level was 23% higher than the maximum F.B.A. allowance for a single but still 24% below the Estimated Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point for 1988 and 30.5% below the Adequate Budget Level for Hamilton-Wentworth (Figure 1).

Since the inception of GAINS-D, the province has regularly increased the benefit. The basic monthly allowance (excluding shelter subsidy) for a single person has increased 146.5% from $216.67 in July 1974 to $534.00 in July 1988. However between May 1975 and May 1988, the general Canadian Consumer Price Index increased 150%. Without even considering the additional costs many disabled persons face, or the below the poverty level income the allowance was initially set at, a 3.5% loss in the GAINS-D allowance's purchasing power has occurred.

Families with disabled children may be eligible for special assistance through Family Benefits. This program is known as the Handicapped Children's Benefit. This allowance is designed to help parents of disabled children meet the ongoing additional costs arising from the child's disability. The benefit is adjusted according to the particular needs of the individual situation up to a

maximum of $300 per child per month. However, the benefit is incrementally decreased once the parents income surpasses $32,000 annually. In addition to the financial assistance, the disabled child (not his/her family) also receives the non-monetary benefits of the F.B.A. program.

3.3.4 Shelter Subsidy

As previously indicated (Section 3.2.5), F.B.A., G.W.A., and GAINS-D share a similar formula for shelter subsidy calculation. The 1988 threshold level for a single F.B.A., GAINS-D recipient was $119.00, where 80% of the excess (above $119) was subsidized, to a maximum subsidy $159.00. The initial implementation of the SARC reforms, significantly changed the way in which shelter subsidies were calculated (see section on G.W.A.).

3.3.5 Support Services and Employment

Research confirms that many recipients of F.B.A. tend to lack the skills which would make them competitive on the labour market. Many, in fact, wish to learn these skills, but there are significant blocks including program availability, and the lack of support services and financial assistance which would facilitate this process.

A survey of social assistance recipients completed in 1985 by Single Mothers Against Poverty made a number of observations. Many women in the survey noted that a lack of education was a major contributing factor to their being on government assistance. In this survey, 58% of respondents reported education levels of Grade 9 to 11 and 61% had plans to continue their education. Major blocks to education included the costs of education, difficulty with day care and transportation.

Prior to SARC, employed individuals were also eligible to receive Family Benefits. A person working less than 120 hours per month might have been eligible for certain exemptions. For example, there was a basic amount, 'basic earnings', that recipients were permitted to earn which was not considered when benefits were calculated. A single person was permitted to earn $75/month without deduction

from their benefits and a family up to $100/month. In addition to the basic earnings exemption, sole support parents were permitted a flat rate work expenses exemption of $40. If a person was elderly, permanently unemployable (P.U.E.), disabled or blind, his/her work expenses allowance would be $50 with a possible additional allowance of $40 if the applicant has extra work related costs associated with age or disability. On top of the basic earnings exemption, 50% of the additional earnings up to a maximum of $290.00 was not deducted from a recipient's allowance.

If a recipient began full-time employment (120 hours/month for 4 consecutive months) he/she was eligible for the Work Incentive Program (W.I.N.) administered through F.B.A. This program consisted of monthly cash benefits which depended on earnings and family size and began after 4 months of full-time employment. Included in this benefit were all the non-monetary benefits characteristic of F.B.A.

W.I.N. was designed to provide an incentive for F.B.A. recipients to work. Unfortunately the level of the W.I.N. benefit had not been updated since 1981 and as a result it fell short of providing a monetary incentive to work. The F.B.A. benefit for 1 adult and 1 child (over 16) was $914/month. In comparison, the same recipient earning $675/month at a job would receive $150 W.I.N. benefit for a total income of $825 monthly. This was approximately 10% below the benefit that a non-working F.B.A recipient received and resulted in an annual income of $9,900, 31.6% below the 1988 Estimated Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point.

For the first four months of full-time work before the individual was eligible for W.I.N., the earning exemptions for a 1 adult, 1 child family were applied (as with part-time employment):

$675.00
-190.00 [i.e., $190 not considered income (100+50+40)[5]]
$465.00
$914 - 465 = $449 (difference from F.B.A. is paid to recipient)
$675 + 449 = $1,124 (monthly, for the first four months)

5 The $100 refers to the basic family earnings exemption. The $50 refers to 50% of the next $100 earned above the earnings exemption. The $40 refers to the flat rate work expenses exemption.

This monthly income was also higher than the W.I.N. supplemented income.

Once a client began a full-time job (regardless of qualifications for W.I.N.) he/she was also eligible for phase-out allowance. The client could choose to receive the $250 benefit in a lump sum or on a three month payment schedule. The added advantage of the latter was the simultaneous continuation (just for the 3 months) of the F.B.A. non-monetary benefits (e.g., O.H.I.P. coverage). Both W.I.N. and the phase-out allowance were designed to help the individual through the transition from social assistance to employment.

In October 1989, the W.I.N. program was discontinued and replaced by the Support to Employment Program (STEP)) as part of the initial implementation of the SARC reforms. The STEP program was available, in identical form to both the recipients of G.W.A. and F.B.A. These changes eliminated many of the disincentives which were present in the W.I.N. program.

As with the W.I.N. program, the amount of the benefit received by the working F.B.A. recipient depended upon the amount of income they had left from their job after certain deductions. Under the STEP initiative, working recipient deduct their basic exemptions (Income Tax, C.P.P., and U.I.C.) plus a flat rate of $175.00 and child care expenses up to a maximum of $390 per month for each child under five and $346 per month for each child aged 5 to 12 years old. In addition, the working recipient is now able to retain 25% of the remaining earnings without having their level of benefits reduced. The rest of their earnings are deducted from their F.B.A. entitlement to yield a final figure for their level of benefits.

In addition to these incentives, clients are entitled to receive:

- $250 for start-up costs such as new clothes
- a deduction of $100 a month for any training allowances received
- longer term health benefits

The STEP program represents a significant improvement over the W.I.N. program. On May 1, 1991 additional improvements were announced to the system which would increase the income of a single parent with two children by $163.00 per month (see the case example on page 35a).

Additionally, Vocational Rehabilitation Services are available to those eligible disabled persons who wish to become employed. The applicant must be certified as disabled by a medical report and not eligible for Department of Veterans (Affairs) Allowance or Workers' Compensation Board Benefits. The assistance consists of Individual Vocational Programming (including counselling, assessment, training, restoration services and job placement) and living expenses via F.B.A. through GAINS-R while attending an assessment or training program. The financial aid is accompanied by O.H.I.P., dental coverage and travel allowance.

3.4 Guaranteed Annual Income Supplement for the Aged (GAINS-A)[6]

3.4.1 Overview

The last step in the journey through a lifetime of poverty for social assistance beneficiaries is 'old age'. At 65, recipients are moved from G.W.A., F.B.A., or GAINS-D to Old Age Security programs.

The provincial government is committed to ensuring a minimum annual income for Ontario seniors. In doing so, the government has introduced the Guaranteed Annual Income System (GAINS-A) for residents 65 years of age and over. Seniors may receive income from a variety of sources, including private pensions, the federal government's Old Age Security Pension (O.A.S.) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (G.I.S.). However, a retirement income often falls short of the minimum level set by the province, and when this occurs GAINS-A makes up the difference. For eligible recipients, GAINS-A cheques are sent out on a monthly basis by the Ontario Ministry of Revenue.

Since information provided to Health and Welfare Canada establishes eligibility and entitlement, no separate application is required for GAINS-A. Seniors are eligible for GAINS-A payments if they meet the following requirements:

6 This information was extracted from the Ministry of Revenues, 1988 GAINS for Seniors

CASE EXAMPLE

EFFECT OF IMPROVED FINANCIAL INCENTIVES
SINGLE PARENT WITH 2 CHILDREN AND $400/MO CHILD CARE COST

STEP CALCULATION BEFORE VS AFTER CHANGES ANNOUNCED MAY 1, 1991

	BEFORE	AFTER
I. CALCULATION OF FBA CHEQUE	**$**	**$**
Gross Earnings	1200	1200
Mandatory Payroll Deductions	- 88	- 88
Union Dues and Employer Pension Plans	--	- 48
Net Earnings	1112	1064
Basic Exemption	-175	-175
Child Care Expense Deduction	-400	--
	537	889
Percentage Exemption: 20%	-107	--
25%	--	-222
	430	667
Child Care Expense Deduction	--	-400
Chargeable Earnings	430	267
Maximum Family Benefits	1317	1317
Chargeable Earnings	-430	-267
FBA Cheque	887	1050
Difference Before vs After		163
II. CALCULATION OF AMOUNT BETTER OFF WORKING*		
Net Earnings	1112	1064
FBA Cheque	887	1050
Child Care Expense	-400	-400
Union Dues and Employer Pension Plans	- 48	--
Disposable Income	1551	1714
Disposable Income	1551	1714
Maximum FBA Benefit	1317	1317
Better Off Working*	234	397
Difference Before vs After		163

*Does not include client's out of pocket work expenses such as transportation.

a) in receipt of full federal O.A.S. and G.I.S.; and
b) their total income from all sources is below the guaranteed level.

In order to receive both G.I.S. and GAINS-A, a yearly application for renewal of G.I.S. must be completed. Applications are mailed to seniors by Health and Welfare Canada in January and must be returned by the end of March.

If senior citizens wish to question their eligibility or their benefit level they may contact the Ministry of Revenue's Guaranteed Income and Tax Credit Branch for an explanation. In the event that they are still dissatisfied they may lodge a formal complaint by completing a Notice of Objection form which must be returned to the Ministry of Tax Appeals Branch. At this point it will be reviewed by the Minister and the applicant will subsequently be notified of the Minister's decision by registered mail.

3.4.2 Types of Programs

As eluded to in the previous section, a senior citizen in Ontario can receive an Old Age Security (O.A.S.) pension, the Guaranteed Income Supplement (G.I.S.) as well as GAINS-A. Specifically, when an Old Age Security pensioner has a limited annual income (less than $9,935.00), apart from the pension, he/she may be entitled to a Guaranteed Income Supplement (G.I.S.). If his/her income is severely limited (less than $1,992.00), he/she will be eligible for GAINS-A as well as G.I.S. As of July 1990, the maximum O.A.S. pension for a single senior not eligible for GAINS-A is $347.93 per month and the maximum G.I.S. (when the applicant is not eligible for GAINS-A) is $330.48 per month.

3.4.3 A Lifetime of Poverty

Some senior Ontarians are eligible for three forms of assistance: Old Age Security (O.A.S. - $347.93/month maximum), Guaranteed Income Supplement (G.I.S. - $413.48/month maximum) and Guaranteed Annual Income Supplement for the Aged (GAINS-A - $83/month maximum). The three provide the highest annual income ($10,133.00) a single social assistance recipient could receive. Similarly, a couple who are both recipients of these programs will receive a maximum of $1,400.50 monthly ($700.00/person). These amounts are valid as of July 1990 but

will increase four times a year as O.A.S. and G.I.S. payments reflect changes in the cost of living.

In the Province of Ontario, in 1986, 19% of seniors were below the Statistics Canada poverty line. The poverty is most heavily concentrated among "single" seniors - 34% were below the poverty line compared to only 5% of elderly couples. There is obviously significant room for improving in the levels of social assistance support to elderly persons - particularly those who are living on their own.

4.0 SIGNIFICANT ISSUES

4.1 Poverty As A Long Term Condition

In theory, a person could join the welfare roles at age 16 and, considering average life expectancies, remain in a condition of chronic poverty for sixty-four or more years. He/she could move from program to program and never receive adequate support services to achieve independence from the Social Assistance System. Other sub-groups such as the disabled, rarely have the opportunity or are rarely provided with support services necessary to find permanent employment that pays an adequate income. Thus, these people are also forced to endure a lifetime of poverty.

It is women, though, who are most often caught in this long term poverty trap. Approximately half of lone parent females live below the poverty line in the province of Ontario. This is largely due to their dependence on social assistance payments - prior to SARC, a single mother with two children had an income that 25% below the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point.

The implementation of the SARC reforms should raise these incomes closer to the poverty line but the final accounting is not yet in.

4.2 The Working Poor

A group often ignored in discussions of social assistance reforms is the working poor. Only recently has Ontario implemented a program whereby the earnings of the working poor are subsidized (topped-up) to a level of the corresponding benefit.

Although the figures are not as recent as one might hope, the 1981 Census data regarding employment income presents a grim picture. In 1981, 19.9% of men in Hamilton-Wentworth reported employment income less that the Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point. For women, the corresponding percentage was 50.7%. Since the recession, we have seen a further concentration of women in "ghettoized" employment so that, on a Regional basis, updated data would unlikely show

significant improvement. Employment, therefore, is not a reliable solution to the problem of poverty.

Certainly many of the non-monetary benefits open to social assistance recipients are not available to the working poor (e.g., prescription drugs, dental work, eye glasses, prosthetic devices and shelter subsidies). The exception, of course, would be those who qualify for the topping-up benefit provided under the auspices of G.W.A.

The solution of some of these problems awaits the full implementation of the SARC reforms.

4.3 The Need For Support Programs: Some Examples

The S.P.R.C. has argued that adequacy, as a goal for social assistance policy, includes a dimension which goes beyond financial assistance to include the ability to participate in the life of one's community. This aspect demands that social assistance policy include a notion of enablement which can be developed and accessed through a wide variety of support programming. It was indicated previously that access to services is an important element in determining adequacy and that access to services can be impeded in a variety of ways (e.g., lack of services, geographic inaccessibility and cost as a blockage). Support programs are not only an appropriate, but a necessary focus for the Social Assistance System. The following three sections provide some examples of support programs.

4.3.1 Expanded Employment[7]

Employment, alone, cannot eradicate poverty. Employment, along with a sensitively developed social assistance program, can.

Traditionally, the private sector has been looked to as the key actor in employment growth. Recent trends confirm what many analysts, including the S.P.R.C., predicted during the early 1980's: that the traditional engines of growth (large, heavy industry) in many communities, including Hamilton-Wentworth, could weather the recession, regain profitability and experience growth without expanding employment.

Information received from the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission (C.E.I.C.) confirms that in recent years in the Hamilton C.M.A. there has indeed been positive growth in the service sector, and a small to negative growth in low to semi-skilled, high paying manufacturing and heavy industry employment (refer to Appendix D). Conversely there has been an increase in the demand for higher skilled technical jobs (individuals with apprenticeships or a college education).

As well, there has also been an increase in low paying work within the service sector. However, many of these positions are not being filled. This may be due partly to a decrease in the youth population in the Region (from 98,785 in 1976 to 91,420 in 1986). Youth have traditionally been the prime candidates for this type of work. More generally though, this trend may also be a direct result of the increased availability of more desirable employment during these good economic times. Simply, there are more jobs to choose from.

Certainly the federal, and it would appear increasingly the provincial government, have placed the vast majority of their considerable resources at the disposal of the private sector. Federally, through the Canadian Job Strategy Programs, there has been a trend towards more sharing of responsibility and employment development between government and the private sector. Provincially, the development of Hamilton-Wentworth Skills Training Advisory Committee is a

7 The bulk of this information is taken from personal communications with Andy Korosi of the Canada Employment and Immigration Commission.

welcome innovation in terms of local control of training monies). Both have served, to date, as a forum primarily for the private sector.

In Hamilton-Wentworth, local government has developed a sophisticated regional economic strategy to increase its international competitiveness. This will place an emphasis on sectors other than heavy industry, such as services and the voluntary sector. As well, the strategy includes the expectation of an increase in the number of smaller competitive companies, that is, those supplying products to larger companies. Within this framework though, there is a lack of attention to two key issues. These are particular problems associated with employing the employment disadvantaged and the possibilities inherent in a mixed approach to economic development.

These two issues which are centrally-related to expanded employment, require further discussion here. First, the private sector has not, traditionally, been the sector to respond to the employment needs of the employment disadvantaged, the vast majority of whom are social assistance recipients (e.g., the disabled, single mothers, etc.). Recently, however, the employment disadvantaged have been targeted for training and education opportunities to a greater degree than has previously occurred. Second, the provincial government must continue to support innovative attempts at employment creation which do not necessarily fall into the traditionally defined role of the private sector (e.g., develop a mixed employment approach). It is widely recognized that a growing proportion of job creation is occurring in jobs at the lower end of the wage spectrum. While the possible growth of poorer quality employment may keep the unemployment rate low, it may have an equally profound impact on income distribution creating an even larger group of working poor.

The response to the first issue mentioned above is <u>training and education</u>. What we know about training and education for the employment disadvantaged is far less than what we do not know. We know for example, that the National Training Program, according to the Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment (1984) did not meet the retraining needs of women. We know, from a 1983 survey conducted by Single Mothers Against Poverty in Hamilton-Wentworth, that 84% of their respondents (single mothers on social assistance) were not enroled in

educational or training programs but wished to be. We also know that our Regional Social Services Department has an employment services unit whose purpose is to assist chronically unemployed men and women in finding employment and to ensure that basic bridging programs are well attended (even though they are more poorly funded).

During the last two years, attempts have been made to assess the effectiveness and relevance of program initiatives for different target groups. The joint federal/provincial initiative which focuses on social assistance recipients began in 1987. Both the Canada Employment Centre (C.E.C.) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services have plans for an evaluation of these activities; the results of these evaluations should be available over the next year or two. The C.E.C. has conducted surveys of Canadian Job Strategy (C.J.S.) program participants in 1985-87 (C.J.S. Planning Committee, 1987 Preliminary Report) and 1987-88. While the 1985-87 survey indicated positive results in terms of employment success following the program, the results are not yet available for the social assistance recipient group alone. As well, the S.P.R.C. is completing a study of the effectiveness of the referral system of job training programs. To our knowledge, this type of study has never been done with the intent of publicly releasing the results.

Our other research (Csiernik and Rempel, 1986) has indicated that many - if not most - recipients wish to work given the necessary supports. Our research has also indicated, however, that "the poverty trap" often results in poor self-esteem which sometimes results in a loss of motivation to seek a way out. Support programs should include basic programs to increase self-esteem and remotivate those who may have become discouraged. We are not endorsing a "blaming the victim" perspective, but, rather, a positive, voluntary, non-punitive approach which would work with people, in an attempt to empower them. Given that many recipients would be happy to leave the Social Assistance System behind them, such programs could, we believe, have measurable effectiveness.

The response to the second issue related to expanded employment is the mixed employment approach and innovative attempts at employment. Depending exclusively on the private sector for expanded employment is too narrow a strategy given the

potentially questionable quality of employment which may be created and the risk for the employment disadvantaged.

There is, across Ontario, the potential for a vast array of complementary strategies for employment creation and retention which should be actively promoted and supported by both the federal and provincial governments. Among these alternatives are entrepreneurial incubators (e.g., in Hamilton, the Small Business Centre), production co-operatives and community development corporations. The increasing importance of small business as a source of new jobs has been recognized by the key players in local economic development. Ongoing discussion concerning establishment of the Small Business Centre and the targeting of small business for special initiatives by the C.E.C. indicate a commitment to encourage further development in this sector. In many cases, such innovative forms of economic activity are, by nature, likely to include the employment disadvantaged as labour targets. (For a fuller discussion of community development corporations, please see Brief Submitted to the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada, Social Planning and Research Council, Hamilton, 1983.)

The drop in the available low to semi-skilled, high paying jobs have left many unskilled workers without employment. Because of this, many think that what is needed is a training continuum. This would ensure that displaced workers would at least have a marketable and "updated" skill with which they could utilize when seeking employment. Some current training programs are attempting to achieve this goal. As examples, the Canadian Job Strategy and the Hamilton-Wentworth Skills Training Advisory Committee will be discussed.

The Canadian Job Strategy is a job training and job experience program with two basic goals: i) to help those in need; and
ii) to do what works best.
Those in need refers to both the employers and the workers. Specifically, the official target groups are females, natives, visible minorities and the disabled. In addition, social assistance recipients, older workers and youth are priorities. The program is a partnership between the C.E.C. and the community which may include other levels of government, colleges and universities, community groups,

employers and their associations, workers, and the Chamber of Commerce. Inherent to this approach is the concept of a "local planning strategy" in which the local Canada Employment Centre, through consultation with the community, seeks to identify and meet local employer and worker needs. An important principle is the sharing of responsibility for training and employment development between government and the private sector. It is important to note that employers and program coordinators involved in these programs are from both the profit and not-for-profit sectors. Generally, the C.E.I.C. actively seeks to market these programs by aiming for permanent jobs and permanent training instead of concentrating on temporary short-term solutions.

The Hamilton-Wentworth Skills Training Advisory Committee is funded primarily by the federal and provincial governments and partly with municipal funds and assesses local labour markets and occupational needs through surveys. With this information the committee purchases and coordinates training courses. This work is community driven and to avoid overlapping services, it is coordinated with the C.E.C.'s Canadian Job Strategy.

Before closing this section on expanded employment one final item should be discussed. As of July 1987 the federal and provincial governments came to a two year agreement whereby $100 million dollars will be set aside for programs which will help social assistance recipients prepare for and obtain employment. A number of organizations are involved in the coordination of this initiative including the C.E.I.C., F.B.A., G.W.A., Mohawk College and Citizen Action Group. It is important to realize that social assistance recipients have special needs and barriers with respect to attaining employment and therefore require special programs.

Depending on the needs of the participant, the programs may contain an employment readiness component which can include life skills and motivational counselling. In addition, skill training and work experience are emphasized to facilitate a return to the labour market. Participants may receive an allowance or wage depending upon the particular setting. One is reminded though, that if participants earn more than what the Social Assistance System permits, benefit

cut-backs will occur. As well other allowances may be available to offset the costs of transportation and child care.

4.3.2 Employment Facilitator: Child Care

Even where training is effective and employment opportunities exist, barriers to employment may still exist. For example, Single Mothers Against Poverty (1983) found that access to and affordability of day care, transportation costs and low self-esteem were significant barriers to training - the same would hold true, in many cases, for employment.

Child care programs vary tremendously from municipality to municipality, but certain issues are global: there are insufficient approved spaces available; where there are spaces, costs may prove prohibitive; and, where subsidies exist, limits may keep low to moderate income families out of the approved market.

Child care has never been a luxury, although popular perception may so have suggested. It has, however, increasingly penetrated even popular perception that access to good quality care is a necessity and, for government, a compelling adjunct to social and economic policy.[8]

4.3.3. Housing[9]

An essential component of any viable social assistance strategy is a comprehensive and equitable set of housing policies. We have already seen, for example, the impact the shelter component of social assistance allowances has on determining the remaining disposable income of recipients.

We would agree with the Government of Ontario "that basic affordable housing is achievable for all Ontarians" (Government of Ontario, 1985:1) and would go a

8 In Hamilton-Wentworth, the work of the Day Care Advisory Committee of the S.P.R.C., adopted by our Regional Council, has resulted in improved access to subsidized care and an innovative and effective funding formula for day care centres (see First and Second Interim Reports of the Day Care Advisory Committee).

9 The bulk of this information is taken from personal communication with Maggie Fischbuch of the Regional Social Services Department.

step further to suggest that such housing should in fact be a basic right for all Ontarians. The current philosophy for assessing the demand for subsidized housing in Ontario is based upon the idea of housing those people in the greatest 'need' first. Within this context, the Social Planning and Research Council thinks that the government has a significant role to play in the provision of adequate and affordable accommodation within the province.

While the Ministry of Housing's Assured Housing for Ontario initiative, announced in December 1985, has established a progressive course of government action on paper, it may be premature, at this point to adequately gauge its success in meeting the needs of Ontario's social assistance recipients and working poor. At that time, the province was given the administrative responsibility for social housing; previously it had been the responsibility of the federal government administered through the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The program is still largely federally funded, (60%) but allows for input from both federal and provincial levels of government. Since the end of 1985, a number of housing programs have been implemented through this initiative:

1. revisions to Rent Review;
2. social housing initiatives;
3. convert-to-rent; and
4. low-rise rehabilitation.

In addition, other new initiatives have also been implemented including:

1. project 3,000 (in 1986, the province funded 3,000 new units);
2. currently there are plans for 30,000 new units over the next three years;
3. changes to the Planning Act facilitate affordable housing development.

'Subsidized housing' is a general term which may be used to describe a number of programs. First, non-profit housing may be municipal, private or co-op and is currently funded provincially. A portion of these developments are designated for

rent-geared-to-income. Second[10], the Ontario Housing Corporation (O.H.C.) is responsible for public housing, which is 100% rent-geared-to-income. Although none has been built since the late 60's, administration is the responsibility of the local Housing Authority. Third, there are developer subsidies for all sorts of housing development. Fourth, tax breaks are provided for individuals, landlords and developers. And fifth, shelter subsidies are offered through social assistance programs.

Even with these housing initiatives and amendments to the current shelter subsidy program, the issues of adequate supply and access to that supply persist. Thus, government intervention in housing supply will continue to be necessary.

Like many social assistance programs, housing and its many related issues are constantly changing. For example, before December 1987 singles had no access to non-profit housing, unless they were "labelled" (i.e., disabled). This has changed. Now the issue is the lack of availability of appropriately sited units for singles.

An effective housing policy should be based upon the following three criteria:

a) accessibility;
b) adequacy; and
c) affordability.

Accessibility raises the question of whether subsidized housing is equally available to all needy segments of the population (e.g., physically disabled, psychiatrically disabled and singles). Long waiting lists and insufficient supply of adequate units are crucial factors which further impede accessibility.

10 In the 1950's, 100% rent-geared to income housing was built. However, this met with substantial opposition, and as a result "integrated" apartments were constructed. This housing was approximately 15% rent-geared-to-income units, and 85% low end of market. It focused primarily on families then on seniors as these groups were more politically acceptable. Since 1970's there has been a push for a higher relative percentage of rent-geared-to-income units.

In March 1986, the Social Planning and Research Council completed a major study of the housing and support care needs of the physically disabled in Hamilton-Wentworth (S.P.R.C., 1986). It became apparent during the course of the study, that one of the impediments to ensuring equal access to subsidized housing was the point-rating of disabled persons using the same system designed for families (see Appendix E). Upon further examination, it became clear that this system did not adequately reflect the special housing needs of the disabled, and that a point-rating system for the physically disabled was required. It is interesting to note that this same recommendation was also made by the provincial Standing Committee on the Administration of Justice (1981). Changes in policy to address these inequities and shortcomings would go a long way in ensuring equal accessibility for all.

Adequacy of supply is the second, necessary criterion. As of June, 1988 in Hamilton-Wentworth, there were over 800 families and approximately 200 disabled applicants on the waiting list of the local housing authority. In total, this translates into a 8.9% increase from June 1987 in number of applicants on the waiting list. Certainly, this list is only one indicator of the true magnitude of need in the community. Despite the yearly allocation of units to this Region and the recent formation of a Municipal Non-Profit Corporation (City of Hamilton), the supply of assisted housing is still inadequate.

In addition to supply concerns, adequacy criterion must be met on other levels as well. The quality of units, including health and property standards, should be maintained and strictly enforced.

The Social Planning and Research Council formally supports the implementation of a comprehensive community needs survey and waiting list analysis to determine the need for additional units for families and disabled persons. Immediate action to meet the need identified by the above analysis should be a priority. The Council also concurs with the recent government policy direction which supports the funding of mixed-income, integrated projects (i.e., co-operative, private and municipal non-profit programs).

The issue of affordability, the third criterion, as it relates to housing is central to the review of the Social Assistance System in Ontario. Whether an individual or family resides in subsidized housing or not, an income sufficient enough to support oneself in a residence is essential. Adequate housing and sufficient income are directly related to one another. Thus, it would appear that one of the keys to ensuring affordable housing is to implement a broad policy of income maintenance adequacy for Ontario's needy families, singles and disabled persons. Nonetheless, the issue of supply should also be addressed because there is a definite shortage of adequate housing units.

Social Assistance and the Work Ethic

Critics of our social assistance system are very vocal in their concerns about the effects of "welfare" on the "work ethic". There is a concern that people in lowing paying jobs will stop working and go on welfare if the benefits rates are too high. To some extent, the recent "top-up" provisions which have been introduced in Ontario, will ensure that a person is usually better off if they have paid employment.

In general, however, the concerns do not appear to be valid. A recent study of a guaranteed annual income experiment in Manitoba, by the Economic Council of Canada, came to the following conclusion -

> "Time and again, suggestions to reform either income support or social insurance programs in Canada have pressed against the fear that altering benefits for those capable of work might prove counter productive. At its core, the worry is that cash transfers would diminish work incentives. Our results suggest that these fears are largely misplaced. (pg.90)

This conclusion reinforces the results of a number of research projects relating to recipient of social assistance - the vast majority of recipients would rather be working and they are "forced" onto social assistance by a variety of circumstances which prevent them from obtaining employment. If the "work disincentive" argument can be laid to rest then meaningful reform of our social assistance system may become a reality.

5.0 THE FUTURE

In the preceding sections we have presented the facts surrounding the Social Assistance System. We have also tried to explain our values pertaining to and our desires for, a different social assistance system.

It is appropriate at this time to include an overview of future community trends that may have an impact on the issues which have already been explained. Issues such as inadequate incomes, a lack of support services, inequities of worthiness classifications and long term poverty for many "welfare" recipients may continue into the future if the Social Assistance System is not altered. The community trends workshop held on June 22, 1988 (Social Planning and Research Council) provides us with a glimpse of what the future holds for our society.

- There is a continuing shortage of affordable housing. Waiting lists are increasing for rental accommodation and average house prices are too high for prospective purchasers.
- The use of food banks is increasing. People appear to be spending more money on shelter costs.
- Employment opportunities are increasing in the service sector but these jobs are, for the most part, lower paying than the jobs in the manufacturing and other sectors.
- There will be a continued need for services for unemployed older workers who have been displaced by technological advances.
- Disabled people will experience higher costs for services because technology is often part of the service system for disabled people and is frequently expensive. Deinstitutionalization will continue to see more disabled people living in the community and requiring support services.
- Population projections indicate that increasing numbers of people will be living in areas outside major urban areas. Thus services must be made "available" to satisfy these people's needs.
- Finally, there will be an increasing need for more day care because more women are entering, and will continue to enter, the paid work force.

The Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review report and the Premier's Council on Health Strategy Integration and Coordination provide two systems-oriented responses to dealing with some of the issues listed on the preceding pages and the goals listed in section 2.0. The need for more and better local level planning and the need to view the social and health problems of people as very obviously linked are explained in these two documents.

The SARC reforms will be of some help in resolving the ongoing problem of poverty but, ultimately the solution is more than simply "social assistance". The reduction of poverty requires broadly based community responses which require initiative in every sector comprising our community - education, health, employment services, employers and labour. SARC is a good start but it is only a start.

REFERENCES

Atkins, C. "20,000 Choose Paycheck over Welfare Check". Public Welfare, 44 (1), 1986: 20-22.

Aquin, D. Personal Communication. Income Maintenance Manager. Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Hamilton, Ontario. June 1988.

Bacon, R. "A Model Program for all California". Public Welfare, 44 (1): 28 - 29.

Canada. 1981 Census of Canada. Census Tracts: Selected Social and Economic Characteristics for Hamilton. Ottawa: Ministry of Supply and Services, 1983.

Canadian Council on Social Development. Not Enough: the Meaning and Measurement of Poverty in Canada. Ottawa, 1984.

Csiernik, R. The Hamilton-Wentworth Regional Social Services Teen-Worker Program: A One Year Evaluation. Hamilton: Social Planning and Research Council, 1987.

Csiernik, R. and Rempel, S. An Examination of Unattached Women Over 40, Receiving General Welfare Assistance in Hamilton-Wentworth. Hamilton: Social Planning and Research Council, 1986.

Day Care Advisory Committee. First Interim Report of the Day Care Advisory Committee. Hamilton: Social Planning and Research Council, 1985.

Economic Council of Canada. Income Maintenance, Work Effort and the Canadian Mincome Experiment, 1991.

Fischbuch, M. Personal Communication. Housing Officer. Social Policy and Development Division. Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth Department of Social Services. Hamilton, Ontario. June 1988.

Greenberg, D. "Sniffing Out Fraud", Public Welfare, 44, 1984:32-39.

Health and Welfare Canada. Income Security Program, Table of Rates in Effect April - June 1988, Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1988.

Health and Welfare Canada. Your Guaranteed Income Supplement (G.I.S.), Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1987.

Korosi, A. Personal Communication. Employment Market Analyst. Employment and Immigration Canada. Hamilton, Ontario. June 1988.

National Council of Welfare. Poverty Profile 1988. Ottawa, April 1988.

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. How to Appeal to the Social Assistance Review Board, Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1986.

Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services. Income Maintenance Handbook, Toronto, 1987.

Ontario Ministry of Housing. Assured Housing for Ontario: Reforms to Rent Review. Toronto, 1985.

Ontario Ministry of Housing. Your Guide to Ontario's Housing Programs. Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1987.

Ontario Ministry of Revenue. 1988 Gains for Seniors, Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 1988.

Ontario Ministry of Revenue. GAINS, The Guaranteed Annual Income System for Ontario Senior Citizens, Full Tables, Benefits for the Period April to June 1988.

Perkovic, E. and Csiernik, R. Guide to Family Budgeting, 1986, Hamilton: Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District, 1986.

Petit, M. and Wilcox, L. "Inestimable - But Tangible - Results in Maine". Public Welfare, 44 (1), 1986:13-15.

Premier's Council on Health Strategy Integration and Coordination Committee. Discussion Paper for Devolved Models of Health and Social Services: Draft, June 26, 1990.

Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review. Report of the Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1990.

Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth Department of Social Services. An Introduction to the Social Services Department and General Welfare Assistance, Doc.#05785 (no date).

Salciccioli, C. Personal Communication. Manager of Income Maintenance. Regional Municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth Department of Social Services. Hamilton, Ontario. June 1988.

Single Mothers Against Poverty. A Survey of Single Mothers in Hamilton. Hamilton, 1983.

Single Mothers Against Poverty. Health: A Survey of Single Mothers in Hamilton. Hamilton: Single Mothers Against Poverty, 1985.

Social Assistance Review Committee (SARC). Transitions. Report of the Social Assistance Review Committee prepared for the Ontario Ministry of Community and Social Services, 1988.

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District. Brief Submitted to the Royal Commission on the Economic Union and Development Prospects for Canada. Hamilton, 1983.

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District. A Study of Housing and Support Care for the Physically Disabled in Hamilton-Wentworth. Hamilton, 1986.

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District. Brief Submitted to the Social Assistance Review Committee. Hamilton, November 1986.

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District. Tour of Housing Information Package. Hamilton, Fall 1987.

Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton and District. Workshop on Community Trends held on June 22, 1988 that resulted in a report, Community Trends Workshop, Hamilton, July 1988.

Standing Committee on the Administration of Justice. Report on the Ontario Housing Corporation and Local Housing Authorities. Toronto: Queen's Printer, 1981.

Task Force on Program Review. Service to the Public: Canada Assistance Plan. Ottawa, March, 1986.

Young, J. "Reflections on the Root Causes of Fraud, Abuse and Waste of Federal Social Programs". Public Administration Review, 43 (4), 1983: 362-369.

APPENDIX A

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SOCIAL PLANNING AND RESEARCH COUNCIL BRIEF TO SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REVIEW COMMITTEE (NOVEMBER, 1986)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation #1

a) THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT COMMIT ITSELF TO THE DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA OF A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM TO INCLUDE ALL CANADIANS.

b) THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ADVOCATE TO THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT ON BEHALF OF THE CONCEPT OF A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM TO INCLUDE ALL CANADIANS.

c) THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ENSURE BENEFIT LEVELS IN A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM REFLECT ADEQUATE BUDGET LEVELS.

d) THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT TAKE ALL STEPS POSSIBLE TO INTRODUCE AS MANY ELEMENTS OF A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM INTO ONTARIO'S SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

Recommendation #2

a) ALL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE IN ONTARIO SHOULD BE PROVIDED THROUGH A SINGLE PROGRAM OPERATED UNDER REGULATIONS ESTABLISHED BY A SINGLE PROVINCIAL MINISTRY AND DELIVERED THROUGH REGIONAL OFFICES.

b) A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM IN ONTARIO SHOULD REFLECT URBAN/RURAL ADEQUATE BUDGET GUIDELINES FOR ALL BENEFICIARIES, SO THAT BENEFITS ARE TIED TO NEED RATHER THAN STATUS. THIS PROGRAM SHOULD INCLUDE IN ITS BENEFITS GUIDELINES CONSIDERATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS AND HIDDEN SOCIAL COSTS OF DISABLEMENT TO THOSE WHO ARE DISABLED AND TO THE FAMILIES OF DISABLED CHILDREN.

continued/...

Recommendation #3

A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM SHOULD NOT EXTEND ITS FUNDING INTO THE MUNICIPAL TAX BASE AND SHOULD, OVER TIME, BE FUNDED TO AN INCREASING DEGREE OUT OF GENERAL GOVERNMENT REVENUES.

Recommendation #4

CURRENT INEQUITIES BASED ON "CLASSIFICATIONS" OF RECIPIENTS BE ELIMINATED AND BENEFITS EQUALIZED SO THAT THOSE CURRENTLY RECEIVING LOWER BENEFITS RECEIVE THE HIGHEST LEVEL.

Recommendation #5

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT SHOULD AFFIRM THE RIGHT OF SINGLE PARENTS TO REMAIN AT HOME TO PARENT, BOTH IN THE CURRENT SOCIAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM, AND IN A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED PROGRAM.

Recommendation #6

EXISTING PROGRAMS BE AMENDED TO FEATURE A UNIFORM ALLOWABLE EARNINGS LEVEL SUFFICIENT TO ENCOURAGE EMPLOYMENT AND THAT THE PRINCIPLE OF "UNIFORM ALLOWABLE EARNINGS" BE EMPLOYED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SINGLE INTEGRATED AND ADMINISTERED INCOME SECURITY PROGRAM.

Recommendation #7

ONTARIO ADVOCATE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE OTHER PROVINCES TO AMEND THE CANADA PENSION PLAN TO ALLOW PERSONS WHO WORK IN THE HOME BUT DO NOT RECEIVE FINANCIAL REMUNERATION TO ACCRUE PENSION CREDITS.

continued/.....

Reccomendation #8

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT RELEASE INFORMATION ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF TRAINING PROGRAMS FOR THE EMPLOYMENT DISADVANTAGED (SUCH AS THE EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES COMPONENTS OF RECENT PILOT INTEGRATION PROJECTS).

Recommendation #9

THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW EXISTING TRAINING/ EDUCATION PROGRAMS TARGETED AT THE EMPLOYMENT DISADVANTAGED AND DEVELOP A COMPREHENSIVE TRAINING AND EDUCATION POLICY FOR THE EMPLOYMENT DISADVANTAGED AND A SET OF PROGRAMS IN WHICH THE EMPLOYMENT DISADVANTAGED MIGHT VOLUNTARILY PARTICIPATE.

Recommendation #10

THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO ADVOCATE WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT FOR THE INCLUSION OF INNOVATIVE FORMS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY (SUCH AS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS AND CO-OPERATIVES) IN THE FEDERAL INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES.

Recommendation #11

THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO INCLUDE INNOVATIVE FORMS OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITY WITHIN ITS OWN INDUSTRIAL AND EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES, AND THAT IT DEVELOP CONCRETE STRATEGIES FOR ENCOURAGING AND SUPPORTING THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUCH INNOVATIVE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY.

Recommendation #12

THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO EXPAND ITS COMMITMENT TO QUALITY DAY-CARE THROUGH A SERIOUS EXPANSION IN FUNDING WHICH CAN BE USED TO MEET LOCAL DAY-CARE NEEDS - IN THE FIRST INSTANCE, FOR INCREASED SPACES AND, IN THE SECOND INSTANCE, FOR IMPROVED FUNDING TO APPROVED PROVIDERS TO AUGMENT THE QUALITY OF CARE.

continued/....

Recommendation #13

GIVEN AN APPROPRIATE REVIEW MECHANISM, THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES ALTER ITS SHELTER SUBSIDY PROGRAM TO PROVIDE SUBSIDIES REFLECTING ACTUAL SHELTER COSTS AS THE MAJORITY OF PROVINCIAL AND TERRITORIAL PROGRAMS ALREADY DO.

Recommendation #14

THE GOVERNMENT OF ONTARIO ALLOW ALL SINGLES ACCESS TO PROVINCIALLY SUBSIDIZED HOUSING UNITS.

Recommendation #15

A POINT-RATING SYSTEM AND WAITING LIST (SEPARATE FROM THE FAMILY SYSTEM) FOR PHYSICALLY DISABLED PEOPLE BE ESTABLISHED BY THE O.H.C. TO TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THEIR SPECIAL HOUSING NEEDS.

Recommendation #16

THE O.H.C. PERMIT DISABLED PEOPLE TO HAVE LIVE-IN ATTENDANTS.

APPENDIX B

POVERTY AND ADEQUACY LEVEL DEFINITIONS

POVERTY AND ADEQUACY LEVEL DEFINITIONS

Statistics Canada Low Income Cut-Off Point

Statistics Canada developed its values based upon average expenditures in communities using surveys of household expenditures. There are seven categories of family size ranging from one person to seven or more persons. Communities are divided into five groups according to population. One of these groups is metropolitan areas with half a million or more residents and includes Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, Hamilton (includes Wentworth County, Burlington and Grimsby), Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal and Quebec City.

Estimates are made on the percentage the average Canadian family spends on the basic necessities of food, clothing and shelter. Statistics Canada has determined that if a family spends more than 58.5% of its income on basic necessities, it is living in "strained circumstances". This value becomes the "Low Income Cut-Off Point". Appropriate adjustments are made for different family sizes and urban/rural residency.

Canadian Council of Social Development Poverty Line

Since 1973 the Canadian Council on Social Development (C.C.S.D.) has employed the relative income approach, setting its poverty line at 50 percent of average Canadian family income.

The C.C.S.D. line is based on the prevailing value of the average Canadian Family Income as estimated by Statistics Canada. The income figure represents per-tax income. In 1983, the average Canadian income figure was considered to represent the income of a family of three (the average Canadian family size). The poverty line for a family of three is calculated as 50 percent of the average income figure. Adjustments are then made for different-sized families on the basis of family income units (a family income unit is considered to be the annual amount necessary to sustain a dependent). Family-size adjustments are then scaled - a family of one is granted three income units; a family of two has five units; a family of four has seven units, and so on.

Adequate Budget Levels

This method estimates standards for family living by determining, with the help of experts, the costs of goods and services in the community necessary to maintain the physical and social functioning of families.

Living costs include family food requirements, shelter costs, clothing, home upkeep, health care, personal care, transportation, and certain discretionary expenditures as education, recreation and others. Budget estimates can be related to family size, age, sex, occupational and other circumstances of family members. The S.P.R.C. Adequate Budget Line is based on the actual cost of each of the above-listed items in Hamilton-Wentworth. The actual costs are found in the Guide for Household Budgeting in Hamilton-Wentworth for 1990. These costs are summed and the total represents the adequate budget line.

The guidelines generally represent more than subsistence standards. Subsistence is often defined negatively in terms of social assistance and transfer payments as distinct from earned incomes. Subsistence budgets and 'poverty lines' tend to contain estimates of minimal physiological needs. Adequate Budget Levels do not represent and 'an average expenditure' rather expenditure levels shown are the result of expert group judgements made about basic stocks of goods and services needed to maintain family households.

Sources: Canadian Council on Social Development. Not Enough: The Meaning and Measurement of Poverty in Canada, (Ottawa: 1984) pp.29-31.

Chlan, Joanne and DeSantis, Gloria. Guide for Household Budgeting in Hamilton-Wentworth, 1990, (Hamilton: Social Planning and Research Council).

APPENDIX C

GENERAL WELFARE ASSISTANCE RATES IN HAMILTON-WENTWORTH FOR 1991

CASE EXAMPLES OF BENEFITS RECEIVED BY GWA RECIPIENTS

At the May 14, 1991 Health and Social Services Committee staff were directed to prepare an outline of some budgets of GWA recipients. The package is attached for consideration. The following delivery guidelines were used to calculate budgets.

1) Maximum shelter allowance is paid to those clients whose shelter and shelter related costs are at or above specified limits.

2) Both winter clothing benefits and back-to-school allowances for children are paid once a year. The examples show these benefits averaged per month.

3) The Ontario Tax Credit is an annual payment. The amount of credit is for the 1990 taxation year payable in 1991. This is an estimated amount only.

4) The federal family allowance is a monthly payment.

5) The federal child tax credit is paid in two instalments; the credit is for the 1990 taxation year, payable in 1990 and 1991. This is an estimated amount only.

6) The federal goods and services tax credit is a quarterly payment. The amount of credit is for the 1991 taxation year payable in 1991. Estimate only.

7) All children in the examples are over 13 years of age with the exception of example #1 of working full-time on page 3 and 7 where the child is 8 years old for child care purposes.

8) The mandatory payroll deductions of the example for minimum wage jobs include Income Tax, UIC and CPP only.

9) The mandatory payroll deductions for examples using wages over minimum include Income Tax, UIC, CPP, Union Dues and Retirement Savings.

CASE EXAMPLES OF BENEFITS RECEIVED BY GWA SOCIAL ASSISTANCE RECIPIENTS

SINGLE EMPLOYABLE AT MAXIMUM ROOM AND BOARD PER MONTH EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 1991

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS	
Basic Needs	$ 441.00 *
Additional Personal Needs	$ 50.00 **
Back to School Benefit	.00
Winter Clothing Benefit	.00
SUB-TOTAL	$ 491.00
OTHER CASH BENEFITS	
Ontario Tax Credits	$ 31.00
Family Allowance	.00
Child Tax Credit	.00
GST Credit	18.00
SUB-TOTAL	$ 49.00
TOTAL CASH PAYMENTS	$ 540.00
IN KIND BENEFITS	
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses	$ 21.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$ 561.00
Annual Payments and Benefits	$6732.00

* ie: Comprised of actual payment to landlord and personal needs allowance of $50.

** This $50. can not be used towards actual Room and Board costs if needed.

SINGLE EMPLOYABLE AT MAXIMUM
RENTAL RATE PER MONTH
EFFECTIVE AUGUST 1, 1991

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS	
Basic Allowance	$ 241.00
Shelter Allowance	385.00 *
Back To School Benefit	.00
Winter Clothing Benefit	$ .00
SUB-TOTAL	$ 626.00
OTHER CASH BENEFITS	
Ontario Tax Credits	$ 31.00
Family Allowance	.00
Child Tax Credit	.00
GST Credit	$ 18.00
SUB-TOTAL	$ 49.00
TOTAL CASH PAYMENTS	$ 675.00
IN KIND BENEFITS	
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses	$ 21.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$ 696.00
ANNUAL PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$8,352.00

* REPRESENTS MAXIMUM RENT ALLOWABLE

Note: 1991 Projected Stats Canada Poverty Line for community size 100,000 - 499,000 $ 14,866.00

SOLE SUPPORT PARENT WITH 1 CHILD AT (8 YEARS OLD) MAXIMUM RENT PER MONTH EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 1991

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS		
Basic Allowance	$	552.00
Total Shelter Allowance		605.00 *
Back To School Benefit		10.00
Winter Clothing Benefit		9.00
SUB-TOTAL	$	1,176.00
OTHER CASH BENEFITS		
Ontario Tax Credits	$	34.00
Family Allowance		34.00
Child Tax Credit		48.00
GST Credit	$	40.00
SUB-TOTAL	$	156.00
TOTAL CASH BENEFITS	$	1,332.00
IN KIND BENEFITS		
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses	$	59.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$	1,391.00
ANNUAL PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$	16,692.00

* REPRESENTS MAXIMUM RENT ALLOWABLE

Note: 1991 Projected Stats Canada Poverty Line for community size 100,000 - 499,000 $20,151.00

TWO PARENT FAMILY WITH 2 CHILDREN
AT MAXIMUM RENT PER MONTH
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 1991

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS		
Basic Allowance	$	827.00
Total Shelter Allowance		715.00 *
Back To School Benefit		21.00
Winter Clothing Allowance		17.00
SUB-TOTAL	$	1,580.00
OTHER CASH PAYMENTS		
Ontario Tax Credit	$	34.00
Family Allowance		68.00
Child Tax Credit		96.00
GST	$	48.00
SUB-TOTAL	$	246.00
TOTAL CASH PAYMENTS	$	1,825.00
IN KIND BENEFITS		
Drugs\Dental\Eyeglasses	$	89.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$	1,914.00
ANNUAL PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS	$	22,968.00

* REPRESENTS MAXIMUM RENT ALLOWANCE

Note: 1991 Projected Stats Canada Poverty Line for community size 100,000 - 499,000 $29,491.00

WORKING FULL-TIME

EXAMPLE #1

SINGLE EMPLOYABLE AT MAXIMUM
RENTAL RATE PER MONTH
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 1991

Gross Earnings $6.00 PER HOUR (Minimum Wage)	=	$1,039.20
X 40 Hours X 4.33		207.80
Mandatory Payroll Deductions (Income Tax, CPP, UIC, Pensions, Union Dues)		
Basic Allowance		$ 241.00
Shelter Allowance		$ 385.00
TOTAL		$ 626.00
Gross Earnings		$1,039.20
Less Mandatory Deductions		-$ 207.80
NET INCOME		$ 831.40
Less Flat Rate Exemption		-$ 75.00
		$ 756.40
Less 25% Incentive		-$ 189.10
		$ 567.30
TOTAL GWA BUDGET		$ 626.00
LESS CHARGEABLE INCOME		-$ 567.30
GWA ENTITLEMENT		$ 58.70

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS		
GWA Entitlement		$ 58.70
Back to School Benefit		.00
Winter Clothing Benefit		.00
	SUB-TOTAL	$ 58.70
OTHER CASH BENEFITS		
Ontario Tax Credits		$ 31.00
Family Allowance		.00
Child Tax Credit		.00
GST Credit		18.00
	SUB-TOTAL	49.00
TOTAL CASH PAYMENTS		$ 107.70
IN KIND BENEFITS		
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses		$ 21.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS		$ 128.70
Annual Payments and Benefits		$ 1,544.40
Annual Net Earnings From Work		$ 9,976.80
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME		$11,521.20

Note: 1991 Projected Stats Canada Poverty Line for community size 100, - 499,000 $14,866.00

WORKING FULL-TIME

EXAMPLE #2

SOLE SUPPORT PARENT WITH 1 CHILD (8 YEARS OLD) AT MAXIMUM RENT PER MONTH EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 1991

Gross Earnings $8.00 PER HOUR X 40 Hours X 4.33 =		$ 1,385.60
Mandatory Payroll deductions (Income Tax, CPP, UIC, Pensions, Union Dues)		415.00
Child Care Costs		300.00
Basic Allowance		552.00
Shelter Allowance		605.00
	TOTAL	$ 1,157.00
Gross Earnings		$ 1,385.60
Less Mandatory Deductions		- 415.68
	NET INCOME	969.95
Less Flat Rate Exemption		- 175.00
		794.95
Less 25% Incentive		- 198.73
		596.22
Less Child Care		- 300.00
		296.22
TOTAL GWA BUDGET		$ 1,157.00
LESS CHARGEABLE INCOME		296.22
GWA ENTITLEMENT		860.78

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS

G.W.A. Entitlements		$ 860.78
Back to School Benefit		10.00
Winter Clothing Benefit		9.00
	SUB-TOTAL	$ 879.78

OTHER CASH BENEFITS		
Ontario Tax Credits		$ 34.00
Family Allowance		34.00
Child Tax Credit		48.00
GST		40.00
	SUB-TOTAL	$ 156.00
TOTAL CASH PAYMENTS		$1,035.78
IN KIND BENEFITS		
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses		$ 59.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS		$ 1,094.78
ANNUAL PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS		$13,137.36
ANNUAL NET EARNINGS FROM WORK		$11,639.40
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME		$24,776.76
		- 3600.00 child care
		$21,176.76

Note: 1991 Projected Stats Canada Poverty Line for community size 100,000 - 499,000. $ 20,151.00

WORKING FULL-TIME

EXAMPLE #3

TWO PARENT FAMILY WITH 2 CHILDREN
OVER 13 YEAR OLD AT MAXIMUM
RENT PER MONTH
EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 199[illegible]

Gross Earnings $10.00 per hour X 40 Hours X 4.33 =		$1,732.00
Mandatory Payroll Deductions (Income Tax, CPP, UIC, Pensions, Union Dues)		519.60
Child Care Costs		NIL
Basic Allowance		827.00
Shelter Allowance		715.00
		$1,542.00
Gross Earnings		$1,732.00
Less Mandatory Deductions		- 519.60
	NET INCOME	$1,212.40
Less Flat Rate Exemption		- 150.00
Chargeable Income		$1,062.40
Less 25% Incentive		- 265.60
		796.80
Total GWA Budget		$1,542.00
Less Chargeable Income		- 796.80
GWA Entitlements		$ 745.20

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE PAYMENTS

GWA Entitlement		$ 745.20
Back to School Benefit		21.00
Winter Clothing		$ 17.00
	SUB-TOTAL	$ 783.20

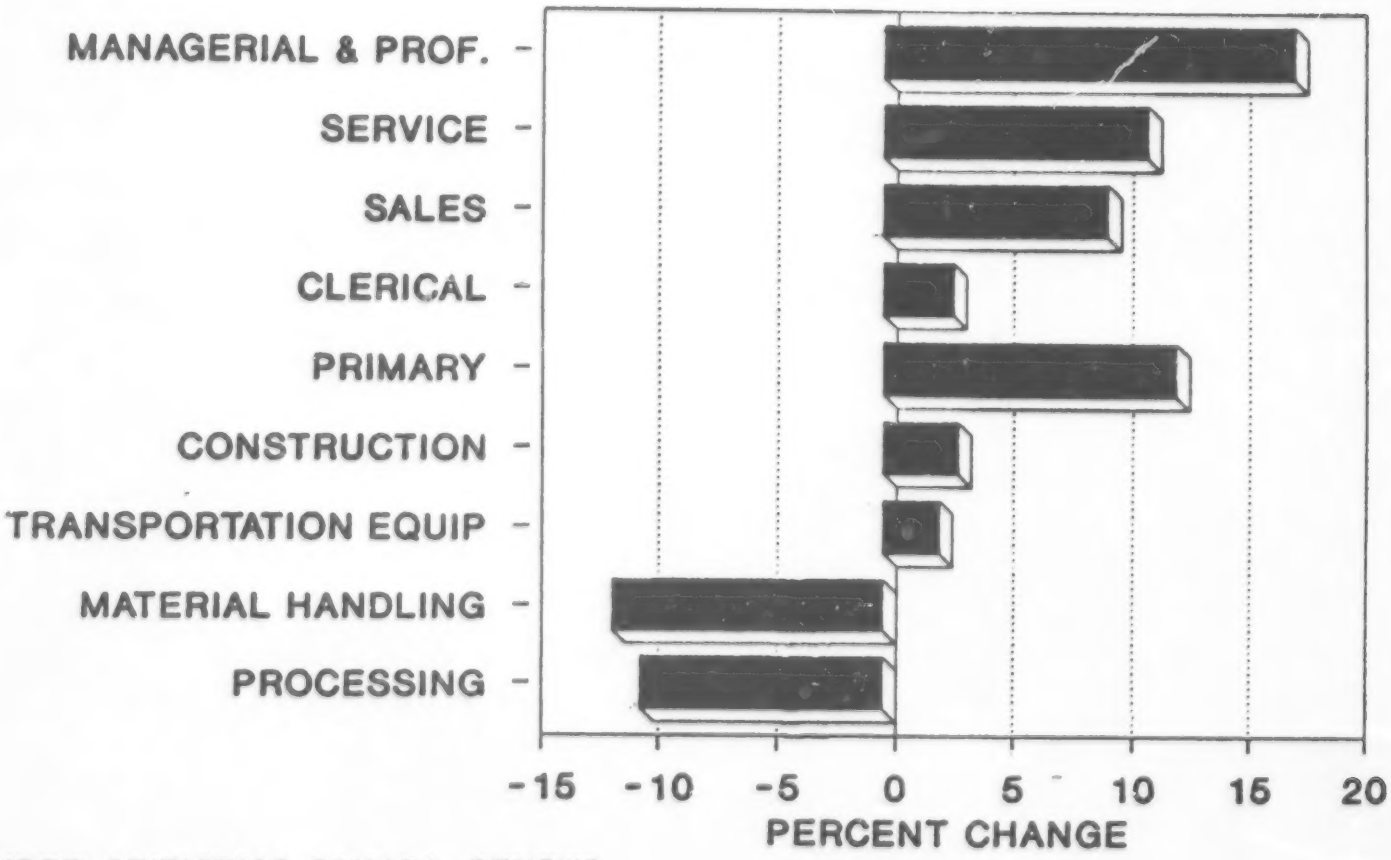
Ontario Tax Credits		$ 34.00
Family Allowance		68.00
Child Tax Credit		96.00
GST		$ 44.00
	SUB-TOTAL	$ 244.00
TOTAL CASH PAYMENTS		$ 1,027.20
IN KIND PAYMENTS		
Drugs/Dental/Eyeglasses		$ 89.00
TOTAL MONTHLY VALUE OF PAYMENTS AND BENEFITS		$ 1,116.20
Annual Payments and Benefits		$13,394.40
Annual Net Earning From Work		$14,548.80
TOTAL ANNUAL INCOME		$27,943.20

Note: 1991 Projected Stats Canada Poverty Line for community size 100,000 - 499,000 $ 29,491.00

APPENDIX D

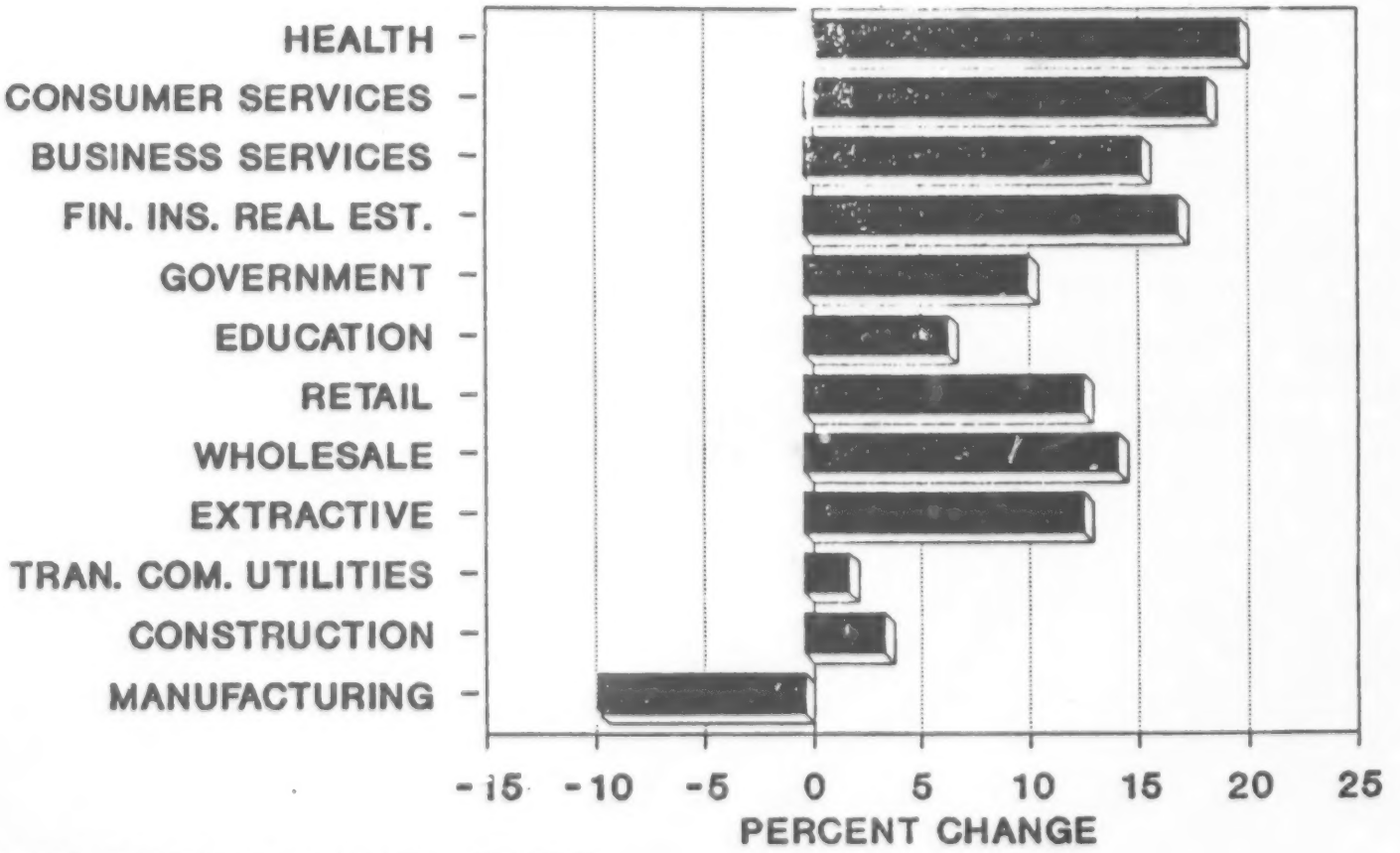
EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN HAMILTON C.M.A.

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY OCCUPATION
HAMILTON CMA 1981-1986



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS

EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY INDUSTRY
HAMILTON CMA, 1981-1986



SOURCE: STATISTICS CANADA, CENSUS

APPENDIX E

A DESCRIPTION OF THE POINT RATING SYSTEM

Ontario Ministry of Housing

OUTLINE

FAMILIES

Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing – Criteria for Selecting Tenants

For families, single couples and single persons.

Ontario Housing Corporation accommodation for families is available to parents(s) 18 years of age or more with at least one dependent child under the age of 18 years. Children attending school on a full-time basis are considered dependents even if they are more than 18 years of age, but under 21.

Physically-handicapped adults are also eligible to apply for subsidized housing, provided they are able to live independently.

As well, developmentally-handicapped and psychiatrically-handicapped adults are eligible for subsidized housing. Such persons must be capable of independent living, based on the assessment of a professional agency.

Rental housing is offered on the basis of applicants' need for housing, not according to the date on which they applied. Tenants pay rent based solely on income, rather than on the size or type of accommodation.

The Housing Priority System

A housing priority system is used to measure an applicant's need in relation to other people who have applied for rent-geared-to-income housing. The system is intended to ensure that applicants with the greatest need are given priority in the allocation of housing.

Applicants with the same number of points are housed on the basis of date of application.
Points are awarded as follows:

1. Income

Points are given on the basis of gross household income, less allowable deductions. Working applicants are allowed an employment deduction as well as deductions for actual expenditures on OHIP premiums and child care up to a maximum amount. Separate income scales are used for each family size.
Maximum points – 100.

2. Current Accommodation Costs

Points are given for the percentage of income spent on accommodation. Accommodation includes utilities. Applicants who are paying less than 30 per cent of their income on accommodation receive no points, while those paying more than 55 per cent of their income on accommodation receive the maximum 30 points.

3. Overcrowding

A family is considered living in overcrowded conditions if:

- More than two persons share a bedroom;
- Two children of opposite sexes, over the age of five, share a bedroom;
- A single parent shares a bedroom with a child of the same sex over five years of age;
- A single parent shares a bedroom with a child of the opposite sex;
- There is a family separation caused by lack of affordable, adequate accommodation. Points are allowed for the total number of bedrooms required to accommodate the missing members of the family.

Maximum points – 30.

4. Special Circumstances

A. Notice to Vacate – A maximum of five points is given if applicants have received a valid notice stating that they must vacate their current accommodation. Points are not awarded if the notice to vacate is issued for reasons such as unjustified rent arrears.

B. Temporary Accommodation – Applicants living in municipal or charitable emergency shelters are eligible to receive 35 points. (If points are awarded in this category, the applicant is not eligible for points under "Current Accommodation Costs" or for "Notice to Vacate".)

5. Housing Conditions/Suitability

Points are given if the applicant's current accommodation is in such a state of disrepair as to be considered unsafe.

Points are also given for:

- A health condition which is aggravated by the applicant's current accommodation
- Living conditions which are unsatisfactory because of: inadequate light, ventilation, heating, or kitchen or bathroom facilities.

Maximum – 35 points.

Local housing authorities are responsible for the day-to-day management of OHC's rental housing across the province. For further information consult the blue pages of your telephone directory for your local housing authority listing.

8/85

Ministry of Housing
Ontario

OUTLINE

SENIOR CITIZENS

Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing – Criteria for Selecting Tenants

Senior citizen accommodation is provided for couples when at least one spouse is aged 60 or more and for individuals aged 60 or more.

Physically-handicapped adults are also eligible to apply for subsidized housing, provided they are able to live independently. As well, developmentally-handicapped and psychiatrically-handicapped adults are eligible for subsidized housing. Such persons must be capable of independent living, based on the assessment of a professional agency.

Ontario Housing Corporation rental housing for senior citizens is offered on the basis of applicants' need for housing, not according to the date on which they apply.

Tenants pay rent based solely on income, rather than on the size or type of accommodation.

The Housing Priority System

A housing priority system is used to measure an applicant's need in relation to other seniors who have applied for housing. The system is intended to ensure that seniors with the greatest need are given priority in the allocation of housing.

Applicants with the same number of points are housed on the basis of date of application.
Points are awarded as follows:

1. Income

Points are given on the basis of gross household income, less allowable deductions. Working applicants are allowed an employment deduction as well as deductions for actual expenditures on OHIP premiums.
Maximum – 100 points.

2. Current Accommodation Costs

Points are given for the percentage of income spent on accommodation. Accommodation includes utilities. Applicants who are paying less than 30 per cent of their income on accommodation receive no points, while those paying more than 55 per cent of their income on accommodation receive the maximum 30 points.

3. Overcrowding

Points are awarded on the basis of the number of bedrooms short of the applicant's requirement in the current accommodation.
Maximum – 20 points.

4. Special Circumstances –

A. Notice to Vacate – A maximum of five points is given if the applicant has received a valid notice stating that current accommodation must be vacated. Points are not awarded if the notice to vacate is issued for reasons such as unjustified rent arrears.

B. Temporary Accommodation – Applicants living in municipal or charitable emergency shelters are eligible to receive 35 points. (If points are awarded in this category, the applicant is not eligible for points under the "Current Accommodation Costs" or "Notice to Vacate" sections.

5. Housing Conditions/Suitability

Points are given if the applicant's current accommodation is in such a state of disrepair as to be considered unsafe.

Points are also given for:

- A health condition that is aggravated by the applicant's current accommodation
- Applicants lacking access to adequate transportation
- Living conditions that are unsatisfactory because of: inadequate light, ventilation, heating or kitchen or bathroom facilities.

Maximum – 45 points.

Local housing authorities are responsible for the day-to-day management of OHC's rental housing across the province. For further information consult the blue pages of your telephone directory for your local housing authority listing.

8/85

APPENDIX F

UPDATE TO "BACK-ON-TRACK" REPORT ON SHORT-TERM SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM

4.2

REGION OF HAMILTON-WENTWORTH

- RECOMMENDATION -

DATE: 1991 July 2

REPORT TO: Chairman and Members
Health and Social Services Committee

FROM: Mr. M. J. Schuster
Commissioner of Social Services

SUBJECT: Update to "Back-On-Track" Report On Short-Term Social Assistance Reform. #SOC 91-145

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT the Regional Chairman through the Chairmen's group request an emergency meeting with the Premier and the Minister of Community and Social Services to address the many issues arising from the implementation of Back on Track.

2. THAT the Regional Chairman send a copy of this Report to all M.P.'s and M.P.P.'s in Hamilton-Wentworth Region, as well as to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association.

M. J. Schuster

M. J. Schuster

FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The annualized impact is $435,000 (net). For 1991 the estimated costs are -$150,000 net. This should be offset by the change in the cost-sharing formula of 90-10 cost-sharing on caseload over 3.5% of population. For 1991 this was estimated to be a savings of $1.4 M (net), for the period April 1 - December 31, 1991. However, not all Back on Track reform costs have been determined. To date, the 1991 caseload is also higher than forecast.

BACKGROUND:

On March 4, 1991 the Honourable Zanana Akande, Minister of Community and Social Services released "Back-on-Track". Since that time staff have made several presentations to committee regarding the impacts of these new legislative changes.

.../2

Most recently the Minister has announced that 63 of the 88 recommendations (some revised) contained within the report will be implemented either in August or October 1991. Municipalities have been given minimal directions/guidelines. (See appendix 1 for the most recent directive) on how to implement some of the recommendations.

Implementation Dates
*August 1, 1991 and October 1, 1991

The implementations outlined in "Back on Track" are to be in place by August 1, 1991 and October 1, 1991.

For the most part implementation of these recommendations will not be problematic, as only minor modifications to Hamilton-Wentworth practices are needed.

Some actions can not be implemented as outlined in the schedule.

These include:

August 1, 1991

Action 11- Home Visits:
The department response to this action is outlined in the report. It is not possible given the present delivery system and present accommodation to complete all initial applications in the office.

Action 37 - Saving for Necessary Items
Guidelines from the Ministry are not available, therefore, this action will not be in place.

Actions 48.1, 48.2 and 48.3 - Job Search Requirements and Obtaining "Suitable Employment"
The Ministry was to develop guidelines around these issues. To date, the Ministry has not forwarded guidelines.

Action 58 - Withholding Assistance "For Information Only"
The Ministry is seeking a legal opinion regarding this practice. As no opinion has been forthcoming, the department will continue using present practices.

Action 88 - "Study of Pay Periods"
The Ministry is to launch a study in this regard. To date no study is underway. Present practices will continue.

..../3

October 1, 1991

Action 17 - Direct Deposit
The Ministry is presently introducing this procedure in FBA offices. Hamilton-Wentworth cannot develop this program by October, 1991.

Action 22 - Purchase of Special Assistance Items From Non-Profits
This recommendation needs further consideration. Implementation will not occur in October, 1991.

Action 54 - Averaging Employment Earnings
This action is a major problem for the administration of the department. It cannot be implemented by October 1, 1991 as present computer programming calculates budgets monthly.

Other Municipalities
Many Municipalities and Regions have expressed concern regarding the lack of consultation by the Provincial government regarding "Back on Track". Several Regions have prepared reports which outline concerns with the directions of the reforms.

Municipalities across the province recognize that social assistance programs are undergoing tremendous changes. A one-time short-term GWA program has the potential to become a guaranteed annual income program. This is highly feasible given the announcement regarding the easing of eligibility requirements and the increase in allowable incentives. The proposed experiment to allow for self-declaration also supports this apparent direction. The issues regarding job search and the definition of suitable employment are also problematic. Further review and discussion are needed. In as much that the Ministry plans to set job search guidelines when in fact local parameters need to be set which reflect the local economy. More people may be eligible.

Hamilton-Wentworth Response to Back-On-Track On Short-Term Social Assistance Reform
Hamilton-Wentworth has already voiced its concerns to the Ministry (See appendix 5-letter from Regional Chairman to Zanana Akande). The need to pressure the government for consultation remains, especially given the increased costs to municipalities, the rising caseloads, the potential for further growth and provincial lack of response to more equitable cost-sharing.

Case Examples of Benefits Received by Social Assistance
On May 14, 1991 Health and Social Services Committee directed staff to prepare examples of benefits received by social assistance recipients. Included in the Report (Appendix 4) are examples of such budgets. References to income provided directly by the provincial and federal government, are included in the examples. Annual incomes are outlined.

Prepared by: Alfred Spencer, Director of Income Maintenance
Kurt Braun, Acting Manager of Income Maintenance
Ken Baker, Supervisor of Income Maintenance

July 2, 1991

UPDATE TO "BACK-ON-TRACK" REPORT ON SHORT-TERM SOCIAL ASSISTANCE REFORM

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
1	The Minister should make a commitment to making special necessities mandatory benefits for people receiving social assistance. A list of necessities should be included in the GWA and FBA regulations.	October/91	Unknown	Presently under study by the Ministry regarding the items to include as mandatory. Once this is known, the financial impact can be assessed.
2	Basic dental care should be extended under FBA to single parents and others. Basic dental care of GWA recipients should be included as a mandatory special necessity under GWA regulations.	Outstanding (Not addressed by Ministry to date)		
3	Needs tests for Supplementary Aid and Special Assistance should be standardized and consistently applied across the province.	October/91		Hamilton-Wentworth presently uses Ministry standards and forms.
4.1	There should be a commitment to extending the personal needs allowance in GWA and FBA to all people in need in institutions and hostels. People should not be denied this allowance based on the category of institution.	October/91	Unknown (previous forecast $72,000)	List of approved institutions needed from province.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
7	The rate distinction between single employable and temporarily unemployable people under GWA should be abolished.	August/91	-$ 113,000	This will increase employable rate by $8 per case. Will be in place.
8	While in hospital, people on social assistance should continue to receive their full allowances for at least three months, with provision for an extension if appropriate.	August/91	$ ∅	Will be in place.
9	A battered woman who has fled the home and who is in need should be granted social assistance for three months. Extension should be allowed based on individual circumstances.	August/91	$ ∅	Revised: A battered woman who has fled the home and who is in need should be granted social assistance for three months without regard to those financial resources to which the spouse makes a claim. Extensions should be allowed based on individual circumstances. Will be in place.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
4.2	The personal needs allowance should clearly be made an item of general assistance for those who receive it under GWA. This way, there will no longer be any local discretion as to whether the allowance is paid or not.	October/91	0	Can be fully implemented.
4.3	Regulations and guidelines under FBA and GWA should be amended to raise the personal needs allowance to $135 a month from $100.	August/91	-$ 1,600	Revised: Regulations and guidelines under FBA and GWA should be amended to raise the personal needs allowance to $112 a month from $100. (See appendix 1) Will be in place.
4.4	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should adopt a policy that previous overpayments should not be deducted from a recipient's personal needs allowance.	August/91		Already in place.
5	Boarders should be eligible for a mandatory personal needs allowance of $135 monthly.	August/91	-$ 160,000	Revised: Boarders should receive a special increase of $50 per cheque. (See appendix #1) Will be in place.
6	The distinction between profit and non-profit boarding rate should be abolished and the allowances equalized at the for-profit rate.	August/91	-$ 177,000	Will be in place.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
10	Municipalities and First Nations communities should be invited to make proposals to participate in pilot projects in self-declaration. There should be several pilots in different areas of the province, both urban and rural. Area Offices of the Ministry of Community and Social Services should work with the pilot projects to ensure that the application process for FBA is also simplified and expedited.	October/91		Pilots have not been announced to date. Hamilton-Wentworth is not seeking to pilot this project.
11	The requirement for a home visit should be abolished. Home visits should only be made at the request of an applicant or recipient.	August/91	Could have Administrative Cost-Impact	Revised: Home visits should occur only at the request of the client, or as part of a random sample, or when necessary to ensure that social assistance is not abused. Currently clients, pending UIB are interviewed in the office. All others are visited to determine eligibility on initial applications. Effective August 1, 1991 only clients who insist on office applications will be accommodated. This is due to physical space limitations. No other action will be taken at this time.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
12	People seeking assistance from GWA offices should have their applications taken and their eligibility determined within two working days of first contact with a GWA worker. Where eligibility is established, payment should be calculated from the date of application.	Outstanding		
13	Applications for social assistance must be taken in all cases. The right to make an application should be confirmed and promoted throughout the system.	August/91	$	Hamilton-Wentworth does this.
14	A clear policy statement should be distributed throughout the system affirming that all decisions on rejection of an application for assistance or reduction or cancellation of an allowance must be provided in writing. In addition, the person must be advised in writing of his or her right to appeal.	August/91		Hamilton-Wentworth has procedures in place. (See appendix #2)

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
15.1	The FBA regulations should be revised so that an applicant who originally applies and is found eligible under an existing FBA eligibility category is deemed to be eligible for FBA from the date of application for GWA.	October/91	+$ 300,000	Revised: The GWA regulations should be revised so that persons who are heads of families whose spouse is absent will receive an allowance equal to that payable under FBA, such allowance to be entirely funded by the province. (Now applies to sole support only.)
15.2	All people receiving GWA for two consecutive years should be deemed to be eligible for FBA in the 25th month.	Outstanding		
15.3	Staffing in provincial FBA offices should be increased to handle the backlog of applications for the program.	August/91		Non-applicable.
15.4	More municipal and provincial offices should experiment with joint intake processes for GWA and FBA.	August/91		Discussions are pending with local Ministry of Community and Social Services Offices.
16	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should establish a $5 million annual fund to provide more support for services and materials in languages other than English and French.	October/91		Department annually reviews the need for services in other languages.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
17	The practice of directly depositing social assistance payments in a bank account of the recipient's choosing should be encouraged by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in its own offices and municipal offices.	October/91	Unknown	Hamilton-Wentworth staff are reviewing the feasibility of this initiative. Can not be ready for October 1, 1991.
18	People who receive GWA should have the same protection as recipients of FBA against redirection of their social assistance allowance to a third party.	Outstanding		
19	Unconsolidated counties should begin the process of consolidating for the purposes of administering social assistance.	October/91		Non-applicable.
20	The Ministry of Community and Social Services and municipal representatives should begin the process of reviewing the role of District Welfare Administration Boards (DWABS), including the issues involved in consolidating service delivery in Northern districts that do not now have a DWAB.	October/91		Non-applicable.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
21	The Minister of Community and Social Services should give a commitment immediately on behalf of the government of Ontario to establish a Council of Consumers composed of social assistance recipients who are members from local organizations. Self-help groups, consumers advocacy and other advocacy groups and the community at large should be asked for their ideas on the structure and specific mandate of the Council.	October/91		Needs further development on the provincial level.
22	Where possible, resources from Special Assistance and supplementary aid budgets should be used to purchase services and goods from self-help groups to encourage people receiving social assistance to run their own self-support neighbourhood services.	October/91		Needs further clarification. Will not be ready by October 1, 1991.
23	A communications strategy should be developed by the Communications and Marketing Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services to ensure that accurate, timely and relevant information, prepared by a variety of sources, is provided to people receiving social assistance on how the system works and what their rights, responsibilities and opportunities.	August/91		Hamilton-Wentworth already provides information. (eg) (Rights and Responsibility pamphlet)

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
24	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should indicate by directive that any applicant or recipient is entitled to be accompanied or represented by an advocate when dealing with the social assistance system.	August/91		Procedures are already in place.
25	The Communications and Marketing Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services should develop plans for a public education campaign to inform people about social assistance and the reform agenda.	August/91		Non-applicable.
26.1	Legal counsel for the Ministry of Community and Social Services should explore all avenues for prohibiting by regulation any disclosure of names of persons receiving social assistance, including release of names during closed sessions of municipal council.	August/91		Not an issue locally.
26.2	Should regulatory change not be possible, a directive should be sent to all municipal councils and provincial offices stating the government's opposition to the release of the names of persons receiving social assistance.	August/91		Not an issue locally.
26.3	In addition, the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner should be asked for a legal opinion on the impact of the new Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act on disclosure of names to council members.	August/91		Not an issue locally.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
27	Regulations under General Welfare Assistance should be clarified to ensure that GWA is extended to all eligible persons working full-time who are in need.	October/91		Is fully implemented. Hamilton-Wentworth has supported the concept of topping-up wages and Hamilton-Wentworth's efforts were a front runner to the STEP Program.
28	A new regulation should be introduced for single parents so that they do not have to go through an imposed waiting period before being eligible for Family Benefits.	October/91	$	See also Action 18.1.
29	Regulations should be amended to clarify that eligibility on the basis of residency does not require an applicant to have a permanent address.	August/91		Is in place. Hamilton-Wentworth does not have a permanent address requirement as a condition of eligibility.
30	Residency rules should be formally dissociated from home visits.	August/91		See actions 11 and 29.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
31	The regulations under GWA should be clarified to ensure that all people (visitors and out-of-status claimants) applying for landed immigrant status as refugees are considered to be fulfilling the residency requirement for eligibility.	August/91	∅	Will be in place. Generally being actioned now.
32	Youth aged 18 to 20 living the parental home should be granted assistance in their own right where they are in need and where: 1) they have lived independently outside the home for a certain minimum period, such as six months, and have returned home to resume secondary-level education; or while they have been living outside the home with the intention of living there independently, paying room and board, and have either returned to school or are looking for work; or 3) they provide an affidavit stating that their parent or parents cannot support them financially in the home.	Outstanding		
33	Employable persons aged 16 and 17 who are in need and who are living outside the family home should be eligible for assistance unless there are special circumstances that indicate they should not be eligible.	October/91	- $ 20,000.	Can be in place.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
34	Self-employed persons who are in need should not, in principle, be automatically ruled ineligible for GWA. Work on a consistent set of province-wide guidelines covering assessment of self-employed income should begin immediately.	Outstanding		
35	A grace period of six months should be allowed in which a person receiving social assistance may retain assets related to small business, farming, or other defined "tools of the trade" up to a specified ceiling. An extension beyond six months should be granted, based on a review of individual circumstances.	October/91		This encourages the ability of client, to return to gainful employment. Can be in place.
36	The rule governing ownership of a second property as grounds for ineligibility for FBA should be abolished.	August/91		Non-applicable.
37	The wording of the FBA regulation that applies to saving for necessary items should be extended to GWA.	August/91		Needs further clarification. Cannot be implemented by August 1, 1991.
38	The rules related to "inadequate consideration" and the spending down of assets or income to obtain social assistance should be revoked.	Outstanding		
39	In line with the Henson judgement, regulations should be changed to allow persons with disabilities to receive small or moderate estates without loosing their allowances and benefits.	October/91		Non-applicable.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
40	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should withdraw its appeal of the Social Assistance Review Board decision on disability determination.	August/91		Non-applicable.
41	The medical advisory board should be required to provide written reasons for its advice on disability determination.	October/91	Unknown (Possible Cost Savings)	Implementation required by Province. Hamilton-Wentworth staff strongly agree with this recommendation. Further Hamilton-Wentworth has been very successful in having the Medical Advisory Board consider social histories as an item included with medical evidence.
42	Couples aged 60 to 64 should be made eligible for FBA on the same basis as single persons.	August/91	+$ 200,000	See appendix 1, page 1) Will be in place.
43	The discharge payment for persons leaving an institution and moving into a home in their community should be extended to become a community start-up payment. It should be made available, on a consistent basis under both GWA and FBA, to persons leaving institutions and to others in need who are setting up an independent residence.	October/91	-$ 30,000	This requires further definition by the Ministry prior to implementation as to definition of institution and who will qualify for setting up independent residence. Can be implemented.
44.1	The provincial government should enter discussions with the federal government on terms of an immigration agreement that would include resolution of the sponsorship issue.	August/91		Non-applicable.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
44.2	Pending resolution of the sponsorship issue through federal-provincial negotiations, social assistance should be made available to sponsored immigrants who are in need and who sign an affidavit stating that their sponsor is not providing support.	October/91	-$ 30,000	Calculation represents present applications due to sponsorship breakdowns. Can be in place.
45	Couples receiving GWA and FBA should receive double the single rate.	Outstanding		
46	The Minister of Community and Social Services should press the Attorney General to implement changes in the Family Law Act to extend laws relating to support obligations for couples of the same sex.	Outstanding		
47	The $40 boarder charge levied against two unrelated persons sharing accommodation should be abolished. Boarder charge should remain for normal boarding circumstances.	October/91	-$ 180,000	Can be in place.
*48.1	The regulation requiring a person to take any job of which he or she is physically capable should be changed to refer to "suitable employment".	October/91	Unknown	Further information is required as to the meaning of "suitable employment," in order to implement by October 1, 1991.
*	NOTE: ACTIONS 48.1 - 48.3 can have a major impact on the philosophy/determination of ongoing eligibility (GWA) for employable clients.			

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
*48.2	The Minister of Community and Social Services should write to all municipal councils stating that job searches may be suspended in instances where they are not warranted.	August/91	Unknown	Hamilton-Wentworth is waiting for direction/clarification from the Ministry. Unlikely to be implemented by August 1, 1991.
*48.3	Criteria should be developed indicating what factors welfare administrators should take into account in requiring job searches.	August/91	Unknown	Hamilton-Wentworth is waiting for direction/clarification from the Ministry. Unlikely to be implemented by August 1, 1991.
48.4	The section of FBA regulations that says benefits may be cancelled or suspended if a person is unwilling to accept employment should be abolished.	August/91		Non-applicable.
				Note: Actions 48.1 - 48.3 can have a major impact on the philosophy/determination for ongoing eligibility for GWA "employable" clients.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
48.5	The reference to history of employment in the GWA regulations should be abolished.	October/91	-$ 120,000 (Represents persons disqualified potentially being eligible)	This requires further clarification. Strongly disagree. The reference of employment history is a valuable tool in determining whether a persons previous employment history demonstrates barriers to employment, cross referencing of employment may in fact deem a person eligible for such programs as U.I. training and U. I. benefits. This is clearly a benefit to the client. There is a high financial impact to municipalities, as clients transfer to other systems. Hamilton-Wentworth's present Quit/Fired Policy would be eliminated.
49	As an interim step, the tax-back rate on income above the level of allowable exemptions under the Supports to Employment Program should be reduced from 80 per cent to 66-2/3 per cent.	October/91	-$ 25,000	Revised: As an interim step, the tax-back rate on income above the level of allowable exemptions under the Supports to Employment Program should be reduced from 80% to 75%. - Can be implemented. - May make more people eligible.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
50	The calculation of the deduction for child care expenses under the Supports to Employment Program (STEP) should be changed to ensure that the full value of the deduction is realized.	October/91	- $25,000	May make more people eligible.
51	In addition to the basic exemption under STEP, persons with disabilities who receive social assistance should be allowed to deduct specified work-related expenses, including those attributable to disabilities, at their actual cost.	October/91		Revised: Persons who are disabled or permanently unemployable under FBA will be permitted, in calculating their net income, to deduct work-related expenses which are attributable to their handicap.
52	All mandatory deductions, including union dues pension contributions, should be included in the definition of net income under STEP.	October/91	Undetermined	May make more people eligible. Could cause major financial impacts. Staff believe that the Provincial estimates of $200,000 is low. Can be implemented.
53	The treatment of income under STEP should be the same for both job training and employment earnings. The employment start-up benefit should be available to persons beginning training, as well as those entering the workforce.	October/91	-$ 60,000	Can be implemented.
54	All people receiving social assistance should be allowed to average their employment earnings over six months.	October/91		Guidelines from the province needed.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
55	All persons with disabilities who receive social assistance and who take training away from home should be eligible for the special accommodation (second residence) benefit that is now only available to participants in the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program.	October/91		Non-applicable.
56	An enforcement strategy should be developed to ensure that social assistance regulations and directives are implemented in a reasonable and timely fashion. This enforcement strategy should also include decisions by the Social Assistance Review Board.	October/91		Hamilton-Wentworth present practices are as outlined. Can be implemented.
57	A simple and straightforward in-house appeal procedure should be established to settle disputes over GWA and FBA at the local level. Disputes that remained unresolved could still be taken to the Social Assistance Review Board for a decision.	October/91		Hamilton-Wentworth has a procedure in place. Can be implemented. (See appendix 2)
58	A definitive opinion should be sought on the legality of the current practice of withholding social assistance cheques. The Ministry of Community and Social Services should act on that opinion. In addition, a policy must be developed to ensure that cheques are not withheld for information purposes only.	August/91	Unknown	Present procedure cannot be altered by August 1, 1991.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
59.1 - 65	First Nations Recommendations			Non-applicable. (See attached appendix #3)
66	The Ministries of Community and Social Services, Education, Colleges and Universities and Skills Development should review provincial training and employment programs to identify ways to improve coordination and effectiveness.	Outstanding		
67	The Ontario government should expand its efforts to combat the serious illiteracy problem in the province.	Outstanding		
68	The Ministries of Education and Citizenship and Culture should work together with the federal government to remove the systemic barriers, including lack of access to child care, preventing immigrants from receiving English or French as a second language training. They should also provide adequate funding to meet the demand for training.	Outstanding		
69	More services for people with disabilities should be delivered through mainstream programs.	Outstanding		

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
70	The Minister of Community and Social Services should urge the Attorney General to consider amendments to the Family Law Act that would redress the lower standard of living faced by women after family breakdown and that would provide a stronger direction to the courts in determining adequate support particularly for children.	August/91		Needs further clarification.
71	The Ontario Student Assistance Plan should provide post secondary students with an adequate income that makes it unnecessary for them to apply for social assistance.	Outstanding		
72	Planning should commence to transfer the foster parent program from social assistance legislation to the Child and Family Services Act.	Outstanding		
73	An action plan should be developed by the Ministry of Community and Social Services in consultation with community groups, to merge the Handicapped Children's Benefit and the Special Services, At Home Program and to transfer the integrated program to the Child and Family Services Act.	Outstanding		

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
74	Negotiations should commence between the Ontario government and municipal representatives on an appropriate client-to-staff ratio. In the interim, for the purposes of the 1991 municipal budget year, the 90:1 GWA client-to-worker ratio and the 1:6:2 supervisor-worker-clerical staff ratio that is established in the integrated FBA/GWA sites should be used as a basis for immediate action.	Outstanding		
75	A Human Resource strategy committee and a training committee should be established immediately to begin work on necessary Human Resources planning to facilitate the implementation of social assistance reform.	August/91		No details available.
76	The Ontario government must decide quickly on new funding arrangements for social services.	Outstanding		
77	The province and municipalities must share at the existing 50-50 formula the costs of meeting the province-wide GWA caseload standard.	Outstanding		
78	The provincial government should agree to fund the additional staffing costs incurred by municipalities in 1990 under the existing 50 per cent formula.	Outstanding		

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
79	The Minister of Community and Social Services should adopt the principle cost neutrality for municipalities in the implementation of the reforms in this report. To ensure that municipalities do not have to spend more to implement those reforms, the province should establish a special fund to provide financial relief to those municipalities adversely affected.	Outstanding		
80	The province should make a commitment to cost-sharing at 50 per cent the major administrative expenses, such as rent, postage, telephone, computer development, supplies, accounting and janitorial services, that are now covered under the Canada Assistance Plan.	Outstanding		
81	The province should fund the administration of joint FBA/GWA intake project at 100 per cent.	Outstanding		
82	Special necessities should be funded by the provincial government at 80 per cent for GWA and 100 per cent for FBA.	Outstanding		
83	There should be cost-sharing for part-time social service administrators in areas of the province where there is no upper-tier level of government.	Outstanding		

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
84	The Minister of Community and Social Services should take the earliest possible opportunity to begin discussions with the federal government on the issue of maintaining Canada Assistance Plan cost-sharing.	August/91		Non-applicable.
85	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should provide $5 million in SEED money for at least six pilot projects to experiment with methods of opportunity planning in a variety of communities.	No implementation date		Hamilton-Wentworth has formally requested to be a pilot for Opportunity Planning.
86	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should make a commitment to follow up on the work of the Benefit Structure Project team to use a market basket approach to establish a standard of adequacy for social assistance allowances and benefits.	October/91	Unknown	Revised: The Ministry of Community and Social Services should complete a study of different market basket approaches to compare to social assistance rates and commit to determine which market basket is preferred by the government as a benchmark.

ACTION	RECOMMENDATIONS	IMPLEMENTATION DATE 1991	ANNUALIZED NET FINANCIAL IMPACT 1991	COMMENTS
87	The inter-ministerial committee on social assistance reform should make child care a priority issue.	Outstanding		
88	The Ministry of Community and Social Services should launch a study of the pay period for social assistance.	August/91		Needs direction/clarification. Cannot be implemented for August 1, 1991.
		TOTAL	-$ 435,000	

Prepared by: Alf Spencer, Director of Income Maintenance
Ken Baker, Supervisor, Income Maintenance
Kurt Braun, Acting Manager, Income Maintenance